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THE
BATTLE ON THE BOSPHORUS.

BY
F. C. ARMSTRONG, ESQ.,
AUTHOR OF
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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
BATTLE ON THE BOSPHORUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE OFFICER OF ST MARK.

WHEN Caffagiola openly announced himself as a spy of the Council of Ten, Giacinto Paoli started to his feet with a look of utter disgust, and even abhorrence, fixed upon the striking features of his preserver, who bore, without shrinking, the gaze of the knight. His

muscular figure was erect, and his dark eyes met those of our hero with a steady look. "A spy!" echoed the Corsican; "and of that iniquitous and cruel tribunal! How is this? You have apparently saved my life; and yet—if not a traitor to that accursed power you serve—you perplex me."

"Because, Signor," slowly and calmly replied the Bravo, "you have yourself struck down the power that held me, body and soul. The chain is broken," he added passionately, "that for years held this body in thrall. Spy, I was; Bravo also, to all who knew me not. But with the last breath of that fiend, Passarini, perished the infamous titles of Bravo and spy."

And the broad chest of the man heaved with the deep emotion that struggled within it. "Signor," he added more calmly, "call me no more Caffagiola the Bravo. The name I bore in my youth was an honest, though an

humble one. I resume it; for Passarini is dead. My name is Luca Manifesto."

"How know you that Passarini is no more?" demanded Paoli, extremely astonished at the strange manner and impressive words of his companion.

"Half an hour before I encountered you, Signor, on the causeway Lommelini, I beheld the body, stark and stiff, of him that was once Count Luigi Passarini, one of the mighty Ten. The corpse was found by some fishermen entangled in their nets, near upon the adjoining islet. A deep fracture was on the back of the head. When I beheld that man's lifeless body, a thrill of wild joy shot through my heart; for years of bondage was broken; and I vowed, even at the sacrifice of my life, that I would save him who had freed the earth of that scourge. I was hastening to the Dalmatian Arms to bring you here, Signor, when I so happily encountered you."

"You are, nevertheless, mistaken, Luca,"

calmly replied the Corsican. "I was not the slayer of Passarini. It was the hand of God. He thought to stab me; but the chain mail beneath my garment frustrated him. You may see," pointing to the steel shirt he had taken off, and which lay upon a chair, "two links broken; for the assassin struck hard. In his haste to step back, he fell forcibly against the sharp iron pin in his own gondola; and, the boat heeling, he went overboard, and sunk, I suppose, from the blow rendering him senseless. But you astonish me," continued Paoli. How knew you that I was in Venice, and that I was present at that man's death?"

"You wronged me, Signor," returned the Bravo," when you supposed I thought your hand slew this councillor of St. Mark. How he died, I certainly did not know, further than that he was found beneath the same waters to which his malice and avarice have sent many a victim. I meant that you were, without doubt, the cause of his death, let it happen

how it would ; for I knew that you, your Squire, and Juliano, left Venice for the purpose of forcing the Count to declare what was the fate of the Signor Alviano and his daughter. I knew, Signor, you were in Venice two hours after your arrival here. You look astonished, Signor Paoli. Alas ! you forget I was a spy of San Marco. As such, strange as it may appear to you, nothing in Venice passed without my knowledge ; hundreds of spies are dispersed through the dwellings of the noble and the ignoble. Not a locanda in Venice is without its spy. Honest Signor Servite little thinks that in his head domestic, he feeds a spy, an agent of mine ; for all those of the locandas communicate with me, and I communicated only with him, who now stands judged before his Maker. Your conversation was overheard by Marco, the valet that served you under the roof of Signor Servite ; and it was detailed to me—too late, Heaven be praised, to report that night. Twenty-

four hours were yet to run before my time came to meet Count Luigi ; and before twenty had expired *he* was dead, and *I* was free. But, Signor, there is yet much to be done. To the officers and rulers of Venice, I am still Caffagiola, the Bravo and spy. You must trust me implicitly, Signor ; for difficult will be the task to clear you, myself, and your attendants of this cursed city. I expect every moment, in this very chamber, an officer of San Marco."

Paoli sprang to his feet, with an expression on his countenance, of distrust, at least the Bravo thought so ; for he continued, in a somewhat mournful tone of voice—

"Fear not Signor, you may trust me. Guido, my child, quick, dress yourself."

Opening a cupboard, he took out a goblet and a flask of wine—

"Take a glass of this, Signor. No better in the Ducal Palace. I must remove these things of yours, and then shew you where you

are to retire while I receive the officer of St. Mark. My child, my only tie on earth, goes with you. If you hear one word that sounds like treachery to you, my child——."

"Nay, man," interrupted Paoli, in a voice of great emotion, "if thou wert ten thousand times my betrayer, not one hair of that child would I hurt to save a dozen lives. No, Caffagiola, or Luca, there is my hand. I freely trust you ; and should we escape from this infernal city, demand of Paoli, aught in his power to do, and he will do it."

"I shall ask a favor," calmly, but with deep emotion, returned the Bravo, pressing the manly hand extended to him. "Not, Signor, for myself, but——" And he looked fondly and devotedly towards the child who had quickly dressed and come towards them, "but for him."

"I guess your wish, Luca," said the Corsican, tenderly taking the child upon his

knee. "Little Guido shall have a second father in Giacinto Paoli."

The Bravo gazed for a second, with delighted tenderness upon his boy, who was looking, evidently pleased, into the handsome and gentle countenance of the Knight. Then, passing his large, muscular hand across his eyes, he hastily turned, removed the attire of Paoli, and locked it within a press. Taking up the Corsican's sword, he said—

"Now, Signor, for your hiding-place. The hour is come."

Advancing towards the panelled wall of the chamber, he touched a secret spring; the panel flew back, revealing a neat, and commodious chamber, hung round with tapestry. A small couch, a couple of chairs, and a table were its furniture. On the wall, hung an exquisite image of our Saviour, beautifully carved in ivory. On the table, lay a large, handsome-bound book, and a wax candle. He had

scarcely time to light this, when three distinct knocks were heard at the outward door.

Laying Paoli's sword on the table, Luca Manifesto, or the Bravo as we shall still call him, placed his finger on his lips, and stepped without the panel, which slid noiselessly into its place. The child with its little finger to its mouth sat down on a stool at the feet of our hero, laying its head on the knee of Paoli, who looked thoughtfully down upon the young face. His mind was rambling into the past, and wondering who and where was the mother of the fair boy before him, when heavy steps in the outer room, and a rough, hearty voice, speaking to the Bravo, caused him to turn his thoughts into another channel.

"Pleasantly employed, Caffagiola," said the officer of St. Mark, evidently helping himself to the wine left on the table. "Body of the Doge! Where do you get your wine? It's magnificent."

"You are welcome to as much as you can

drink of it, Jacomo," replied the Bravo. As to its goodness, the cellars of Count Passarini were always famous."

"*Corpo di Bacco*, you have lost a powerful protector, Caffagiola," returned the officer. Nevertheless, you are in possession of so many of our ruler's secrets, that you may be certain of retaining your present situation undisturbed."

"But have you gained any intelligence," demanded the Bravo, "as to the perpetrators of this strange and incredible deed?"

"That's just what I am come about," returned the officer; "but sit you down, and bring another flask. I have much to say. Yes," he continued, after a moment's silence, "I have discovered the murderer."

Paoli bit his lip.

"You will scarcely believe who it is," pursued the officer. "You remember that Corsican who was concerned in the Faliero plot,"

"Yes," replied the Bravo, "he was banished for three years. And you suppose it was him?"

"Suppose! There is no supposition in it. It's positive. The fishermen have just brought in the missing gondola of the Count, which had drifted on to the shore beyond the Lido. In the gondola was found the scabbard of a most weighty sword."

Paoli recollected, the moment he had heard those words, having missed his scabbard, but he thought it had fallen into the lagoon in stepping into the gondola.

"On this scabbard," continued the officer, which was brought to the dead Count's son, is a golden circle, whereon is engraved some strange characters. Underneath is a winged horse, and under that, the single word, Paoli. Thus, you see, Caffagiola, with all your penetration and all your power of discovery, you were wrong. This Corsican, Paoli, is the man

who did the deed. Confess you have been baffled this time."

"Without a doubt," replied the Bravo. "And was it, think you, in mere revenge for being banished from Venice? For now, I recollect me, the dead Count was the main cause of the sentence of banishment being passed on him."

"No; the present Count Passarini says, no. He is like one demented; he swears he will move heaven and earth but this Corsican shall swing by the heels from the red columns, after first having his bones broken on the rack. You know, Caffagiola, the dead Count rarely forfeited his word in these trifles; and, body of the saints, I can declare—who am the confidant of the son—he is no way behind his father. But I was saying it was not for revenge for his banishment that this daring foreigner committed this astounding crime."

"For what then, in the name of St. Antonio?" demanded the Bravo.

"Why, because the Count caused the banishment of the wealthy merchant, Alviano, to whose daughter this Corsican was betrothed. You see, he lost the girl and the wealth of the merchant."

"A very small portion of the wealth, Giacomo," replied the Bravo; "only the Palace he had purchased from the Pisani, and what it contained, and the sums owed him by the Government."

"There is one thing," said the officer of St. Mark, putting down his goblet with some force on the table, "that puzzles me. There is treachery somewhere, that's certain. I was one of the men chosen, with five others, by the Count to follow, with Tomaso Mocenego, the escort that had charge of the Signor Alviano and his daughter."

Hearing those words, the Corsican scarcely breathed. He was about to move nearer the panel, fearing to lose a word; but looking down, he saw that the child slept with his little

head resting on his knee. The man spoke on. He lost no word that came from him, and what he did hear filled his heart with joy.

“Well, Caffagiola, they were left at the boundary-stone, and the escort returned. We then came up; our orders were to bring back the girl; for she, you know, the dead Count intended for his son. When, just as the maiden was separated from her father—upon my conscience, Caffagiola, my heart relented when I heard the shrieks of the poor girl—suddenly, through the dense fog that lay upon the marsh so thick as almost to blind you, up rode a score of horsemen with a cavalero at their head. The stranger struck down him who held the girl, and she flew into her father’s arms. But that which strikes me with astonishment is, that Tomaso Mocenego was actually about to assassinate the Signor Alviano, when the stranger struck him down with the butt of his lance. *Diavolo!* I thought all was up with us. But this stranger, who-

ever he was, contented himself with hanging Tomaso to a branch of a decayed elm. He then placed the maiden and her father in a litter which came with them; and having released us, he rode gaily off on the high road to Padua. *Corpo di Juda!* The whole thing is a mystery to me."

"Yes, Jacomo, and must remain so. It was one of the dead Count's secrets. But, as you say, there was evidently a betrayer of the Count's plot. Tell me, for the night wears apace, what are the young Count's orders?"

"Why faith, Caffagiola, they were not either very polite or very complimentary; and I felt rather loath to come with them. Nevertheless, as you and I are old friends, and have helped each other, at a pinch—being, you know, not quite so evil-minded as our masters—I give you a hint that this new Count is not quite satisfied with you. In his rage, he said you were playing a double game; or else this

event could not have taken place. He suspected that Paoli must have been some time in Venice unknown to you ; and he bade me tell you, he gives you eight and forty hours, to find, and deliver up, this Corsican ; or else—excuse me, *amico*—he swore you should hang heels up from the red columns of St. Mark."

A loud and mocking laugh came to the ears of the listener, as the Bravo replied—

"The young cock crows loud, Giacomo ; but he gives plenty of time. I promise you I will find this Corsican in less than twenty-four hours."

"*Benissimo, benissimo,*" returned the official. "Now come to him ; for he insists on seeing you this night. All the passes to these suburbs are strictly guarded. We know that the Corsican swam the canal leading hither, and that he knocked down three or four of the night-guard. Body of me ! he is a powerful man,

and must be handled tenderly. But come along; the flasks are empty, and we must be stirring."

After a moment or so, Paoli heard them move from the chamber, lock the door, and slam the heavy outer portal. All then became silent throughout the mansion.

CHAPTER II.

THE THREE SAINTS.

FOR nearly an hour, our hero sat with the young boy, reclining, fast asleep, in his arms, with a feeling of joy in his heart, to which, for many a weary month, it had been a stranger.

“Thank God,” he mentally exclaimed, “my beloved Agnes is alive, safe, and, undoubtedly, with friends. I have, at length, obtained the clue I so anxiously sought. This strange being, to whom, certainly, I owe my life, may perhaps know more. It strikes

me, he may even know this masked cavalero, and where my Agnes now is."

In the midst of a thousand delightful anticipations, the child awoke; and, lifting his expressive eyes to the face of the Corsican, he smiled and said—

"You are very kind to nurse Guido, Signor. Have I slept long? Ah, I see, father has not come back yet."

"No, my boy, he has not; you have not slept very long. But tell me, my poor child, are you often thus left alone to your little self in this dismal old house?"

"Oh, no," returned the child. "I am not very often here; but only come, now and then, to see my dear papa, who loves me dearly."

"And where do you come from, Guido?" questioned the Knight.

The child smiled, and, looking in the Corsican's face, said—

"That is one of papa's secrets; and Guido always does what papa desires him; and he

said—‘Never tell strangers anything.’ But you look so handsome, and so kind, that I think—indeed, I am sure—I might tell you.”

“No, my child,” said Paoli, “you must keep all papa’s commands and wishes safe in your own little breast. You look very sleepy, Guido. You must be tired. You shall go to sleep upon yonder couch, and I will watch over you like another papa.”

Paoli persuaded the child to lie down, and covering him over, he was soon asleep.

Our hero sat down at the table, fell into a perplexing train of thought, and then insensibly into a deep slumber. He must have slept two or three hours ; for, when he awoke, the grey dawn was stealing into the small chamber from a species of skylight of stained glass in the ceiling of the room. As Paoli awoke, he heard footsteps in the next chamber ; and the moment after the panel shot back, and Caffagiola entered. His first glance

was to the couch, on which still slumbered, in all the calmness and innocence of childhood, his little boy. A placid smile played over the Bravo's care-worn features, as he saw how carefully the child had been put to rest ; and, turning to Paoli, he said—

“I fear, Signor, you have found the hours pass heavily and drearily. But I could not return sooner.”

“Nay,” replied the Corsican, cheerfully, “I slept well. The intelligence I overheard from your friend, the officer of San Marco, relieved my mind of a vast weight which has oppressed me for many months.”

“Yes, I can imagine the part you mean,” responded Caffagiola. “I led to it purposely to relieve your mind, as I had not time to impart anything to you myself concerning those you risked your life to serve. But I have more to surprise you still ; though, first of all, let me assure you of the safety of your squire

and Juliano. I saw them both, and told your attendant, who was in a state of intense anxiety, that you were out of the reach of persecution. I persuaded him to remain where he was; for he insisted on my taking him to you."

"You have served me well and kindly, Luca," said Paoli. "I trust the day will come when I may requite it. How fared you with the young Count?"

The Bravo smiled, saying—

"His threats to me, Signor, were the mere vapourings of an angry boy. He has no power over me. I am still thought to be the slave of the Ten Rulers of Venice; for the place of Passarini is already filled by a near connection of the Marchese Tiepolo. Still, our situation is critical; for the most determined and vigorous search is making throughout Venice for your person. There is not a chamber in the city save this, that could conceal you four hours. But come into the other room, Signor;

and, while you are breaking your fast, I will inform you of one or two circumstances that will surprise you."

The Bravo then placed upon the table a very respectable meal, consisting of cold fowls, tongues, and excellent wines. Little Guido soon joined them, and already much taken with the Corsican, would sit beside him.

"I have never," said the Bravo, "seen a victim hunted by the blood-hounds of San Marco with fiercer hate than you are sought after, Signor. The death of Passarini has created as great a sensation in Venice as when Ubertino Carrara seized and gagged the Senators, and carried them from Venice to his own city of Padua."*

"But how," demanded our hero, somewhat anxiously, "can we possibly baffle these blood-hounds? Even should I escape, I will make some effort to clear my name of the stigma of murdering this Venetian Senator."

* Historical fact.—See Muratori.

"Had it not been for a fortunate coincidence," observed the Bravo, "much time must have elapsed before I could have effected your escape from this city. First however, let me impart agreeable intelligence. Last night you overheard our conversation. You heard the official say that a masked cavalero released the Signor Alviano and his daughter from the hands of that villain Guido Mussato, for that is or was his real name, a branded galley slave."

"Yes," interrupted Paoli; "most eagerly do I wish to know that generous cavalero's name."

"You know him well, Signor. Count Michaello Steno is the noble who rescued the merchant and his daughter."

"Count Steno!" echoed Paoli, with a start of astonishment and delight. "How, on earth, came Steno there? I thought he fled into the Roman States."

"No, Signor, he possesses in the Paduan States considerable property, derived from his

mother, who was one of the house of Carrara. He was living at Castle Baldo when I became acquainted with the vile treachery intended for the Signor Alviano's daughter. I sent him information of the plot; mentioned time and place; and the Count saved them. No doubt, at this moment, they are safe and well under shelter of his roof. At all events, from him you will gain every intelligence, if we fortunately escape.

"You have preserved those, dearer to me than life, Luca," said our hero, with much emotion. I will say nothing now. Tell me, what is the coincidence upon which you count to effect our escape?"

"If anything for a moment, Signor, diverts the attention of the rulers of Venice from their mysterious policy, it is during the few hours occupied in some empty pageant or idle procession. You will scarcely credit that so subtle and crafty a government as Venice would not only sanction, but actually be the director and

promoter of the absurd ceremony that will take place to-morrow. Yet, strange to say, I myself was in Venice at the identical period, when this miracle, which I am about to mention, took place. It is now twelve or thirteen years ago, and I knew the man well who beheld the marvel. Though he was an ignorant fisherman, his words were not only believed by the rulers of Venice, but, during his life, he was paid an annual pension; and every year since, on the anniversary of that day, a most solemn and imposing procession takes place. This man died about four years ago; and probably more individuals attended Tomaso Marcello to his last resting place—than ever followed the funeral car of a Doge.”

“You raise my curiosity,” said Paoli, taking little Guido, who looked as anxious for a story as any urchin of the nineteenth century on his knee.

Thirteen years ago, Signor,” resumed the Bravo, “the waters of the Lagune all of a

sudden rose to a most unaccountable height. No tradition existed of their having ever reached within several feet of their then altitude. A tremendous gale from the north east drove them back for several hours; but when it ceased, they rose higher and higher. On the second night of the flood, the wind blew from the south; and, on that night, old Tomaso Marcello was fastening his crazy boat for shelter close to the *riva di san Marco*. While so employed, a figure approached him, and addressing him, said, 'You shall be nobly rewarded, if you will ferry me over to San Giorgio Maggiori.' '*Diavolo !*' muttered old Tomaso; 'do you think me mad? do you not see what a night it is, and the waters so high? Now the saints forbid. It were sinful to risk life.' '*Amico,*' said the stranger mildly, 'your last exclamation is good. But why use the name of the enemy of mankind, as the commencement of your remonstrance? Be of good

heart, friend. Unmoor your bark, and ferry me over. The saints will protect you.'

"Old Tomaso grumbled; but, nevertheless, he released his craft; and the stranger stepping aboard, he pushed out into the troubled waters. The old man was astounded at the ease with which he pulled against the gale; and to San Giorgio they got safe and sound. 'Wait, *amico*, and I will return presently,' said the stranger, landing. In a few minutes, he returned, and with him another stranger. 'Friend,' said the first stranger, 'row us now to San Nicolo di Lido.' Old Tomaso dropped his oars, on hearing what he considered a most insane order on such a night; and the words, *Cento diavolo*, were escaping his lips, when, just in time, he thought the same amount of saints better. He vowed his boat would never live to cross the lagune. 'Old man, do as thou art bid. The saints protect you, and you will be well rewarded.' Tomaso crossed

himself—cast one look at the troubled waters, and again pulled out. San Nicolo was reached in safety, and there they were joined by a third individual. 'Now friend,' said the first passenger, for he alone spoke, 'pull boldly for the two Castles of the Lido.'

"'Though the waves ran high,' old Tomaso said, in relating his story, he never thought anything of them. He pulled away vigorously; and, just as they drew nigh to the straits, he beheld, to his amazement and horror, a galley of immense size coming towards them, bowling along the surface of the lagune and scarcely touching the white tops of the waves. The old man swore that this vessel was manned by a legion of fiends, who rent the air with their screams and yells; shouting, at the same time, that they were proceeding to sink the city of Venice in the waters that encircled her.

"The three strangers then stood up, each waving a huge crucifix in the air. They repeated some unknown words; and, suddenly,

with a terrific yell, and a sheet of fire illuminating the waters all round, the galley and the fiends disappeared, and the water became as calm as a mill-pool. 'Now friend,' said the first stranger, 'you may put us each ashore where you took us up.' Tomaso crossed himself, took up his oars and rowed to San Nicolo; thence to San Giorgio, and finally, landed his first passenger where he had taken him in. The stranger was quietly walking away, when Tomaso humbly observed, bowing to the ground, that after all his night's work, the sight of the Miracle he had seen was but indifferent pay, especially as he had a family to feed.

" 'You are right,' calmly returned the stranger, 'so it would to you. Go, friend, to the Doge and to the procuratore, and tell them, that, but for us three, Venice would this night have perished in the flood. I am Saint Mark.' (Tomaso devoutly crossed himself.) 'My two companions, were Saint George and Saint

Nicholas. Let the magistrates reward you. Also inform them that this flood has been caused by a schoolmaster at San Felice, who was mad enough to sell his soul to the enemy of mankind, and then added to his guilt by hanging himself.' 'If I tell such a story as this,' said Tomaso, who, by this time, felt himself quite at home with St. Mark, 'it is most probable they will hang *me*. Neither the Doge nor the procuratore would believe me.' 'Friend, thou art not without wit.' And, taking a ring worth five ducats, he gave it to the fisherman, saying, 'Give this ring to the magistrates. Tell them to look in my treasury; they will find it missing.' Having thus said, the saint vanished.

"Tomaso found his way to the Doge next day; he related his story, and gave the ring. Saint Mark's treasury was searched. The fisherman's miracle being instantly authenticated, he was endowed with a pension, and an

annual procession, on a magnificent scale, was ordered to take place.

"Such, Signor, is the origin of the grand procession that will take place to-morrow, and which will be followed by all Venice, high and low."

"I have no doubt," said Paoli, "that the fisherman acted under the orders of the Government. It was a masterly stroke of policy to redouble the faith of the people in their patron saint, which, perhaps, began to waver, seeing that the flood did not yield at once by prayers and offerings to St. Mark. But how will that assist us?"

"Materially, Signor. I was sent for last night, as you know, by the young Count Pa arini. At first, he attempted to threaten me for not having discovered you. I quietly informed him that I now served another master—that I was still under the protection of the rulers of Venice, and obeyed their orders. Still, it was my wish to serve him, while obey-

ing them. But I had no fear of his power which was as nothing, when opposed to the Council of Ten. 'But,' interrupted the Count, though in a milder tone, 'the slayer of my father will most probably get to a place of safety in the confusion and disorder of the city to-morrow during the procession, though I have surrounded that part of the city, where he must be hiding, with a strong force who will examine every one leaving that quarter to-morrow to join the procession.' 'I am aware Signor,' I quietly replied, 'that he is in that quarter; and I could almost swear to the spot of his concealment. My reward from the Council will be great if I secure him.' I will double it Caffagiola, exclaimed the young Count, eagerly, 'if you secure him.' After expressing my gratitude, I said, 'Rest satisfied, Signor, he shall be in my hands before twenty-four hours have passed, if he has taken refuge in a certain locality, where I strongly suspect he will be found. But much caution will be

required. You know he is a powerful man, well armed, and in the place of his retreat are a set of the most desperate and abandoned characters, who are mostly robbers on the lagoon. These fellows may be bribed to take him across the lagoon.' 'I have thought of that also,' said the Count. 'There are six channels leading out of the lagoon,' I remarked. 'You must station in all these channels a barge with eight or ten of the Police of St. Mark in each. No boat to be allowed to pass for that day without a counter-sign. Let that be St. Nicolo di Lido. Thus, if they do attempt to get out of the lagoon, they will fall into a trap.' 'The Council will do this; for I mentioned that that precaution was necessary during the ceremony of to-morrow.' 'But I am certain,' I continued, 'of entrapping him before that. Send me to-morrow, to the canal beneath my residence, two hours before the procession assembles, four of the subordinate officers of the

prison: they are under your controul as their chief. Let them be well armed, and in a gondola with four oarsmen; and I promise you this Corsican Signor shall be in my power.'

" 'Your plan is a good one, Caffagiola,' said the Count, 'and shall be followed to the letter. Take this purse,' giving me this: and the Bravo drew one well filled from his pocket, and cast it, with an expression of disgust, into an open chest near him. None of those bribes do I ever spend, Signor. They all go into the hands of Padre Ignacio, for the benefit of the poor and destitute. Another time, I will explain all this—now to let you fully into my mode of proceeding.

"To-night, I will contrive to bring your squire and Juliano here. The spies of the Count pay no attention to those *entering* this suburb; only those *leaving* it. Besides, I can bring them by water to the entrance of the

vaults leading into this ancient mansion. To-morrow, the Count will send here four of the officers under his charge. We must then seize and confine them ; and, disguised in their garments, we may boldly proceed to the gondola they came in. Possessed of the counter-sign, we shall pass, without question, the guard-boat leading to Chiozzi. The men in the gondola will be under my orders, and will not dare to question the reason of our proceeding to Chiozzi. I shall then dismiss them with a note to the Count letting him know where he will find his officers."

"Your plan has every appearance of proving successful," said Paoli, "for even supposing the counter-sign, by any chance, should be changed in the boats guarding the channels, we must force our passage. But what is to be done with little Guido here?"

"I shall send him to his mother, Signor, this night. Some time to-day, if you will not

consider it an intrusion, I will briefly give you an outline of my life, which will explain to you many things that now appear mysterious. I have said, Signor, that I am more sinned against than sinning, I pray you to judge."

"Most willingly will I listen to you, Luca," replied Paoli, "for I feel singularly interested in your hard fate, condemned, as it appears you are, to bear the abhorrent stigma of an assassin's name, without possibility of casting it off till death shall rid you of your tyrant."

"Otherwise, years, Signor, might have passed," replied the Bravo, "till perhaps despair would have raised my hand against a life, hateful to me to endure. In sooth, but for the soothing reasonings of Padre Ignacio—perhaps the crime would have been committed."

The Bravo then proceeded to pack up some

articles he wished to take with him, and to destroy others. Finally, all being ready, after preparing a repast for his guest, the Bravo, as the day was yet young, sat down and related to Paoli, the few, but dismal, events of his early life.

CHAPTER III.

THE BRAVO'S STORY.

"To avoid oppression, Signor, began the Bravo, "I quitted my native land, the valleys of the Tyrol. I was then two-and-twenty years old. My occupation was that of a hunter. I had been married some few months, and my spouse was the sister of Juliano's mother—my wife was gifted with a fatal beauty. I called it fatal, for it has been the cause of my crime, and of all our sorrows. She was not only beautiful, Signor, but had the advantage of a

convent education ; for her father was considered a tolerably rich land-holder in those valleys. For a long time, he refused his consent to our marriage ; but the conduct of our feudal lord, gained me, at last, the hand of Mariana. Even after marriage, this lord's persecutions continued ; he endeavoured, and partly succeeded in his vengeance, to ruin my father-in-law ; so, to save him and my wife, I fled the valleys and mountains I loved so well. At the end of two years, having spent most of my little store, we came to Venice. I purchased a gondola, and strove to support my wife and our two children. I did not like this occupation, and some time after, notwithstanding the entreaties and tears of my beloved wife, I shipped on board a galley as a soldier, and sailed with the fleet upon an expedition against a revolted colony. We were tempted into this expedition, which was not popular, by promise of high pay, and share of the plunder of Zara. The war lasted two years ; and,



being severely wounded, and unfit for service for some time, I was sent back to Venice with others. I was anxious enough to get home ; for I suffered from my wounds. By the merest accident, I encountered a countryman, who informed me that my persecutor had been killed in a boar hunt ; and that my father-in-law was still in existence, and well to do. This intelligence rejoiced me exceedingly. I was yet young, only-six-and twenty, and my wife scarcely twenty. I knew the delight she would feel in returning home to her native country.

“ Before I left Venice, to go to the wars, I had established my wife and children in this very house—once a nobleman’s. But this quarter of the city had long been abandoned by the better class of citizens ; and many of its mansions had sunk into decay ; others were inhabited by the lower class of mechanics, and, latterly, by those who shun the light of day.

“On landing in Venice, I eagerly sought my home. I walked with difficulty, for one of my wounds was in the hip. I need not describe my feelings to you, Signor, when, on reaching my house, I found it shut up. My neighbours, who had never been friendly, informed me—and they spoke almost scoffingly, that one of my children had died. My wife, Merciful Heaven! They dared to say so to my face—had fled with a paramour, and that the other child, but for the generosity of the Marchese Tiepolo, who owned this house, would have perished of want.

“I leaned against the great pillars at the entrance of this mansion, as if turned into stone. I had no power to move. My neighbours, who looked upon me as a foreigner, left me without even a word of pity. Slowly I recovered my recollections. Not, for one instant, Signor, did I believe the vile tale of my neighbours. I knew my Mariana too well

to doubt her faith or her love. 'Here then,' again thought I, 'has her beauty been our curse.' "

The Bravo paused in his narrative; and, putting his hand beneath his vest—he drew forth a miniature set in a plain ivory circle.

"This resemblance of my wife, Signor, was painted by a skilful, but unfortunate, youth, who, in vain, struggled with poverty and neglect, and died in a chamber in this house. I found him sick and ill one evening in the streets, and brought him here. He lived with us some months; but he never could overcome the disease that had taken such powerful hold of him from his very infancy."

Paoli took the miniature; it was, in truth, sweetly and delicately painted; and, never, he confessed, not even excepting his own betrothed, had he seen so lovely a face.

"In sooth, Luca," said he, "your Mariana was almost too lovely. How came you, so devotedly attached, to leave one so young and

beautiful, and trust to the chances of war, when you could have earned sufficient as a gondolier to support you?"

"Alas, Signor, the restlessness of the human race was strong in me. You know not the life of excitement and peril the Alpine hunter enjoys. From my earliest youth I gloried in the perils of the chase. To follow the chamois and the grisly bear amid the wild crags and glaciers of our mountains, was my greatest delight. The monotonous life of a gondolier on these dismal canals, disgusted me; and, in a moment of weariness, I sailed on that expedition, which I certainly did not think would last beyond six months. But excuse this interruption; I will continue.

"As soon as I recovered from the shock, I proceeded to the mansion of the Marchese Tiepolo, and saw that kind and noble Signor. He gave me the address of the family where he had placed my little girl, and offered me every assistance; but, of course, could give me no

due to the fate of my unfortunate wife. He pressed a purse into my hand, and said, in parting, that I must let him know how I got on, and to apply to him if I gained any tidings of my lost wife. 'You would be welcome,' he said, 'to the mansion you formerly lived in ; but I have sold all my holdings in that quarter of the city. The Count Passarini purchased them, for what purpose I cannot conjecture, as they all paid little or no rent.' I was bewildered, distracted, and broken-hearted. I succeeded in renting my old habitation from the Count Luigi's steward ; for I loved the chamber that once held my wife. Before I could commence any enquiries, I was seized with a fever, and left to the care of a wretched old woman, who neglected, and, finally, robbed and deserted me. During four long months, I lay sometimes in possession of my senses ; at others, raving like a maniac. At length, my strong constitution conquered, and I rose from my couch of pain, gaunt and fearfully emaci-

ated. I wandered out more like a spectre than a human being. My long black hair hanging in masses over my hollow cheeks, and my unshaven beard, gave me so hideous an appearance, that my neighbours laughed at my ghastliness.

“My wife had disappeared about four months before my return. In vain I sought for some trace of her. No clue whatever could I gain. Six months more passed, and I began to despair. Tormented in mind and body, I earned but little as a gondolier, for my spare, gaunt body, and gloomy looks, lost me many customers. Strangers are not liked in Venice. I was often told, in derision, to turn bravo, which, it was added, would suit me better than a gondolier’s occupation. How little, Signor, can man judge, by looks, of the heart of his fellows! At that period I would not have crushed a worm.

“One evening I had returned late from a wearisome pull to Fusina, and was moorin

my boat in the dirty and narrow canal that runs through this quarter of the city, when I was suddenly accosted by a man wrapped in a long, brown mantle, and a beaver, much slouched over his face. 'I say, *amico*, do you belong to this quarter?' 'Yes,' I replied. 'Do you happen to know,' continued the stranger, as I stooped to fasten my chain and padlock, 'the house where one Luca Manifesto lives?' 'Yes,' I returned, 'I know the house well—but—'

'Never mind buts, my man,' interrupted the stranger, 'if you know the house. that's everything. There, don't fasten your boat. Keep her in readiness, and you shall have a job that will pay you well. Now come, and, first of all, point out the house.' Giving a shrill whistle, three other men, habited like the domestics of some lord, came out from the deep shadow of one of the houses. My heart beat with intense curiosity and anxiety. Here was some mystery with respect to myself; per-

haps some clue to Mariana. ‘*Cospetto*, Signor,’ I replied,’ unlocking my boat, ‘I shall be glad of a job. Times are bad. If you will follow me, I will show you the house.’

“It was a dull, dark evening. I could not distinguish any of the strangers’ features, but I led the way. As I approached the old palace which I occupied as a home, to my extreme astonishment, I perceived a light from a lower window. I never left a light, my little girl being still with the same female who had taken charge of her. I was annoyed, for I was the sole inhabitant of the mansion. ‘That is the house,’ said I, ‘where you see the light.’ ‘Good,’ said the man who had first accosted me. ‘There’s earnest for you,’ handing me a ducat. ‘Go back to your boat, and be ready to take us aboard when we return to you.’

“I pretended to turn back, but kept an eye on the movements of the strangers. As soon as I beheld them enter the passage, I stole after them, with strange thoughts flashing

through my brain. The two doors leading to my chambers were both fastened; no one but myself and my wife knew the secret mode of entering the house, except the original owners; and death had claimed them long years back. The secret entrance was through the vaults. I stole quietly after the men, and heard one of them say, 'The door is a very strong one: the noise of bursting it open will alarm her, and her shrieks may rouse the inhabitants of this desolate, and notoriously evil quarter of the city. I stayed to hear no more; for I felt in my heart that these strangers spoke of my wife. Who else could it be?

"Wild with joy, fear, and anxiety, I rushed out of the passage, and flew, rather than ran, to the vaults; and, in despite of blows and bruises, squeezed myself through the long, narrow passage, and gained, through a secret trap-door, the interior of the mansion. As I did so, I heard a crashing of timber, as if a mass of stone was hurled at the door; and

then a wild shriek from a female voice. I rushed to the panel, pushed it back, and leaped into the chamber. As I did so, the outward door flew into fragments.

“Merciful Providence ! the first object my gaze rested upon was my long-lost wife ! She stood in the middle of the room. Her garments were torn, disordered, and covered with slime and mud ; her hair was dishevelled, and hanging wildly about her ; her right hand grasped a knife. With a cry of intense joy she recognised me ; and, in a transport of feeling, threw herself, almost senseless, into my arms. Clasping her to my heart, I at once extinguished the light, and sprang with her through the panel into the other chamber. In my hasty entrance I had jammed the frame. No effort could close it ; and, the next instant, the door was burst open, and the strangers, carrying a lighted lantern, rushed in.

“My wife lay perfectly helpless. She appeared reduced almost to a perfect skeleton :

her weight was scarcely that of a child. I hurried along ; but a loud shout announced pursuit through the panel I could not close. Still, acquainted with the vaults, I kept ahead of my pursuers ; but, as we emerged from the vaults, the light of a torch flashed upon our persons, and then in truth the race for life began. I rushed across the ruins surrounding this mansion, and had nearly reached the brink of the canal where my boat lay. It was the third night of the memorable inundation, or rising of the lagoon. The waters had been rapidly falling. I reached my moorings, and was unfastening my boat ; my wife who was recovering the use of her senses, gazed wildly round, warning me that two of my pursuers were within a few steps of us. The foremost at once grappled with me. I let go my hold of Mariana, and, catching him by the throat, hurled him at my feet. The next instant, I felt the point of a stiletto strike into my side but slightly. I caught the wrist of the assassi

as he was about to repeat it, and, wresting it from him in a transport of rage, I drove it to the hilt in his heart. 'Oh, villain, murderer! You have slain the Count,' exclaimed the other, as if horror-stricken, and stooping to raise the prostrate body. But I heeded him not; Mariana had freed the boat; and, just as the others came up, I got her into my gondola, and pulled off, with all the force I was possessed of. 'O, Luca, Luca,' exclaimed my wife, 'pull for the lagune. We can never return to Venice.' As I rowed swiftly on through the Grand Canal, and thence into the broad waters, I eagerly demanded of my wife 'who the man was whom they called Count, for I had slain him. 'Oh, Heavens,' responded she, 'though he richly deserves his fate, would to God that you had not slain him. It is the only son of the Marchese Gradinegro.' 'Gradinegro!' I repeated, 'then, indeed, there is no safety for us within leagues of Venice.'

"Our situation, Signor Paoli, was truly a

fearful one. I did not possess four ducats in the world. The night was a stormy one: the wind came in fresh gusts across the wide waters; and I could hear the roar of the sea-surf, as it beat furiously against the barriers of the Lido. By keeping out of the deep channels and inside the posts, I contrived to make way towards Chozzi, where I resolved to land, sell the boat, and fly into Italy. The thought of my little girl, distracted me; but my wife consoled me by saying, that when once beyond the territories of Venice, it would not be difficult to get her back. It blew, so hard, and the night became so dark, that I fastened my boat to one of the posts, and, covering my wife and self with the awning which I had taken down, I waited till dawn. Anxiously we passed the hours of darkness: we cared neither for the severity of the cold, nor the splash of the short shallow sea as it broke over our low bark; nor for the desolation or poverty that was before us. One thought cheered us,

and rendered the dark hours of that gusty night the happiest we had perhaps ever past. We were re-united when despair had seized our hearts.

“My wife’s story was soon told. Returning home late one evening, after purchasing some necessaries, about four months before my return from sea, she had just entered upon the waste ground, when a mantle was thrown over her head, and drawn tightly, almost to suffocation. She was then lifted up, and placed in a boat. After half an hour’s row, she was raised but nearly senseless, and carried, as well as her terror permitted her to judge, into some mansion, and up several flights of stairs. She was then conducted to a room. Wild with fright, my unfortunate wife looked around her. The persons who carried her off quitted the room before she had power to lift the cloak from her face, and she heard the door bolted and locked. The room was evidently one belonging to a princely mansion; for it was handsomely, if

not splendidly furnished ; but the window, to which she first ran, was firmly secured with crossed iron-bars.

“Not to weary you, Signor, she had been torn from her home by orders of the Count Alberto Gradinegro, the most profligate and abandoned libertine in Venice. At that period, his father was one of the Council of Ten. All Venice rang with stories of that youth’s vices, and notorious cruelty ; for he was known to be as vindictive as he was dissolute. By an unfortunate chance, he had seen my wife purchasing something on the Rialto ; for he and his agents were perpetually prowling the city for fresh victims to his accursed seductions. For nearly a month he strove to win my luckless wife. Failing in this, he proceeded to threats ; and one evening attempted to approach her, when she snatched his jewelled poniard, and, in her passion, wounded him severely. He retired, vowing, with frightful imprecations, that, having scorned his love,

she should try whether his hate was easier to be borne.

“ His vile agents soon made their appearance, and, binding and gagging the wretched victim, confined her in one of the damp vaults of the palace. There, that most inhuman monster had the barbarity to leave her during six dreadful months; and there most probably she had died like many of his victims, but for the protecting hand of Providence. During the inundation, and when at its height, the waters burst into most of the lower vaults and cellars of Venice. Fortunately, the Palace of Gradinegro was built on a somewhat loftier mound than other parts of the city; but, when at its greatest height the flood burst through the barriers opposed to it, and rushed furiously into the vaults of the palace. Mariana thought her hour was come; and at first, when she heard the rush of the water, she felt resigned to the will of Heaven, and was content that the miserable remains of life still lingering in

her wasted frame, should cease. But, Signor, we all cling, no matter how wretched, to existence, when the hour of extremity comes. Hope, that blessed soother of our deepest misery, still sheds a ray, and we struggle to preserve that which the moment before we were willing to resign.

“ Piling, one on another, every article the vault contained, she contrived, by the light of her lamp, to reach a projection near the roof, formed by a kind of buttress or square pillar. Still, on came the rush of the water, and she heard it burst against the door, under which it forced its way with violence. At length, the door gave way with a crash, and a strong torrent burst in. Rapidly, nay instantaneously, it filled the vault half way up the wall. Higher and higher it rose. The heart of my poor wife beat desperately, as she gazed, with the lamp in her hand, upon the dark, discoloured flood, which rose to her feet ; and then—oh, what a moment that was even for the stoutest

heart—it rested, remained stationary a short time, and then rapidly began to fall. This sudden fall, Signor, was caused by the violent gale from the north that set in after the southerly wind had ceased. I was at Fusini at the time, wind-bound.

“As the waters fell, Mariana suddenly thought how she could descend from her exalted situation; for the temporary structure had been washed away. As the waters eddied round the vault, they washed the strong oak door towards her. On this, she had the courage to descend, and kept it stationary beside the pillar. In three hours, as near as she could guess, the water had entirely left the vault; and then a hope of escape flashed through her mind. Her prison-door was gone; the flood had, doubtless, burst through every opposition. Unfortunately, her lamp was near its close: her jailer, doubtless, considered her to have perished.

“My wife was right; by following the

course of the receding water, and by clambering up, and squeezing through, the broken foundations of the Palace, faint and almost exhausted, she gained the outside of the building. It was then dark ; when, just as she was preparing to fly along the narrow causeway that runs along the back of the mansion, two of the domestics of the Count came to examine the damages done by the flood. One of them held a torch ; and, as she passed, it flashed upon her emaciated features. The man started with an exclamation of horror, dropped the torch, and fled into the house. With infinite difficulty, my wife contrived to reach our abode. Finding the doors fast, and trembling with eagerness to know if I still existed, and inhabited our home, she made her way through the passage. Knowing where I placed everything, she struck a light ; and then threw herself exhausted upon the couch.

“ Such, Signor, was my wife’s story. As day broke, the violence of the wind abated ;

and, seeing the marks, I steered my bark for the tower of Chiozzi. But my wife was evidently overcome by her sufferings; and, before we reached Chiozzi, she was in a high fever. As soon as the boat touched the beach, I procured assistance, and carried Mariana to a fisherman's habitation, who kindly offered us shelter.

"I now gave myself up for lost. Not for a moment, did I think of quitting my unhappy wife, who, after eight days of suffering, began to regain her health. I had already planned our departure, and sold my boat, when I was seized, gagged, forced into a gondola, and carried to Venice. Without examination of any sort, I was thrown into a cell into which the light of day never penetrated, nor any other light, save the momentary flash of the jailer's lamp.

"Signor, I will spare you the recital of my suffering, my insanity; for, in that accursed dungeon I lingered two wretched years with-

out hearing the human voice. If I loathed mankind, Signor, and panted for revenge upon my species, I am surely to be pitied and excused. At the expiration of that period, I was taken from my dungeon and brought before three of the Council. What I looked like, I knew not; but, accustomed as the rulers of Venice are to look upon human misery and degradation, they started as their eyes fell upon my gaunt and emaciated frame. One of the Councillors, a man advanced in years, whispered something to his next neighbour, and then they looked even more attentively at me.

“‘You are brought here, Luca Manifesto, to receive sentence of death for the crime of murder.’

“I burst into a fierce laugh, as I repeated the word death.

“‘You have inflicted a thousand deaths, since I—’

“ ‘Gag the prisoner,’ said one of the Signors, striking the table forcibly with his hand.

“I was as weak as a child, or I would have braved death then from the hands of the officials, who were about to gag me, when a sign from one of the Signors caused my removal and return to my dungeon. About a fortnight after this, I was again taken from my cell, and conveyed to the same chamber, wherein, at that time, there was but one Signor, attended by a secretary, both masked.

“ ‘Leave your prisoner,’ said the Councillor.

“And I was thus left alone with one of the Rulers of Venice and his secretary.

“The long examination I underwent by this member of the Council it is needless, Signor Paoli, to tire you with. Sufficent to say, he clearly proved to me that my sentence for killing---the young Gradinegro would be a cruel death. ‘Now hear me, and mark me

well, Luca Manifeste,' said my judge. 'I offer you life and restoration to your wife and child, on certain conditions.' 'Name them, Signor,' I eagerly exclaimed, as my heart beat with intolerable anxiety.

"'At this moment,' began the councillor, 'there exists in Venice a secret and mysterious band of spies, agents of Ubertino Carrara. Assassination is almost of nightly occurrence. Up to this moment, these spies have baffled all attempts to detect them. I have a project which I shall not now declare; but if you are wise and accept my terms, I intend to employ you as my chief agent. You will be powerfully protected, and well rewarded. But in the first place you must become publicly known in Venice—as a Bravo.' 'A Bravo!' I exclaimed with a start of horror. 'To be pointed out as an assassin, shunned, loathed, execrated! Signor, I am ready to die. Execute me! It will be but one death; but to be a Bravo, is to die a thousand times.' 'Fool!'

exclaimed my inquisitor, in a harsh, angry tone. 'Who requires you to be an assassin? 'Tis but a name you will take to blind others. However, die on the rack, if it so please you; and leave your young wife and child to rot in a loathsome dungeon.'

"Oh this was agony to my soul. 'Say, Signor, I frantically demanded, 'what am I to do in my character of Bravo.' 'What you will have to do,' replied the councillor, 'cannot be told you. One thing, however, is certain; you will not be required to shed the blood of your fellow creatures; and, moreover, your bondage shall cease, if it so please you, should you outlive me.' Then, taking the mask from his face, I beheld, with a start, Count of Luigi Passarini, then only one of the Council Forty. 'Now, Luca Manifesto,' continued he, 'I aspire to become one of the ten rulers of Venice; circumstances have given me the power to save your life and restore you to your family. You shall reside in the house you

have always inhabited; you shall also have numerous spies under your control. The first thing to do will be to render your name notorious, which, with my help and under my directions, you will soon do.' Not to weary you, Signor, I took the oath, and a fearful one it was, to obey Count Luigi Passarini in all things, save in shedding blood.

"I was restored to my home, my wife, my child; and then began my career as a Bravo. Several influential Signors suddenly disappeared. They were, in fact, paid spies of the Carrara. Means were taken to have it secretly bruited through Venice that they died by my dagger; whereas, alas! they rotted in the dungeons of San Marco. With the power I had, and finding I was in reality at that period serving the State, I actively entered into the plans of the Count. All the spies of Carrara were betrayed into the hands of the government. I had apprehended several minor Bravoes; and, strange to say, I actually lived a tolerated

Bravo in Venice ; for almost every one knew me. For four years, I acted without my conscience being severely tried. At length, however, Passarini gained his end and became one of the dreaded Council of Ten, From that hour, my tormentor, for such the Count became, never let me have rest. During eight years, I was the slave of that man's ambition and avarice. With such a power as he then wielded, he accomplished every scheme he planned. My soul sickened at the deeds I was forced to commit ; not of blood, certainly, but of treachery and deceit.

“ I may not repeat all the crimes this man perpetrated. Many a family were crushed that became obnoxious to him. I tried secretly to save some of his victims, and sometimes succeeded. When he commenced his scheme against the families of Alviano and Tiepolo, I vowed, even if I was discovered, to endeavour to save the Marchese Tiepolo ; and he, by my means, though he knew it not, defied Passarini.

I often received large bribes—to remove a rival, or to assassinate various individuals. In such cases, I gave in the name of the instigator to assassination, and the person to be assassinated, and then both disappeared. The would-be assassin paid fairly enough for his intended crime by imprisonment, while the object of his hate was allowed to fly into other lands. When Passarini placed his confidential associate as the secretary of the Signor Alviano, I was appointed nightly to watch his safe ingress and egress from the palace of the Count. One night, I caught my nephew, Juliano, tracking this man. I warned him of his danger in so doing. Nevertheless, the villain Mussato suspected Juliano, and contrived that he should be seized at the very time when the unfortunate Signor Alviano was hurried off to the prisons of St Mark. With much difficulty, I procured his release from Passarini. All the Count's plans with respect

to the daughter of the Signor Alviano were known to me, and I sent a trusty messenger to Count Steno warning him of the fate intended for the Lady Agnes. It was well known to Passarini that Count Steno was living in the Paduan territories; and had not the former been cut off by death, he intended getting him into his power. Frightful schemes are also in preparation against the princes of the house of Carrara, who are detested as well as dreaded, by the rulers of Venice.

"Some two or three years after the birth of my little boy here, I prevailed on my poor, heart-broken wife, who incessantly wept over my cruel destiny, to quit Venice, and reside, in the retired and quiet village of Puelfo, about three miles from Ostia."

"Why that is the very village," interrupted Paoli, "where we left our horses."

"I know that now, Signor; for so your squire informed me to-day. This will facili-

tate our plans. A worthy padre who resides there, sometimes visits Venice for two or three days together. He knows my story by means of the confessional, and occasionally brings me my little boy—sometimes his sister, and frequently my still tenderly-loved Mariana. I give all the money I receive to lay out in charity; and now that it has pleased Providence to break my chain, we shall begin the world again. My wife's father is dead, and our formerly happy valleys are now no longer happy valleys; for a race of tyrants rule over the wretched serfs.

“I have been brief, Signor, because I am bound, by oath, not to speak of certain extraordinary transactions. What I have related has been sufficient to show you how I was placed. I do not deny that it would have been more manly and more righteous to die by the hand of the executioner than live as I did, the spy of an unsparing Government, and an object of abhorrence and disgust to my fellow-creatures.

But alas ! Signor, I had not a heart sufficiently stern to relinquish for ever my beloved wife, and to leave her exposed to merciless fate. Therefore, to save her, I became the Bravo Caffagiola.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAPUCHIN.

PAOLI remained during the day quietly awaiting the return of Caffagiola, who, having finished the history of his early life, had departed, with little Guido, to arrange, finally, everything for their escape, and to conduct Pulini and Julianio to his residence.

The day passed slowly; the night advanced, and Caffagiola was still absent. Paoli grew uneasy; he feared some mishap; when, just at the moment, the outer portal opened, and

then he heard the signal at the door. The Corsican drew back the bolts, and the Bravo entered, but alone! Paoli saw, at once, by his flushed face and agitated manner that something wrong had occurred.

"Has anything happened to my squire and Juliano?" asked Paoli, anxiously.

"No, Signor, no," replied the Bravo, throwing aside his mantle and mask. "Nothing has happened to them; but I am forced to change my plans. I am watched, Signor, watched," he repeated, emphatically. "But be assured I will frustrate our enemies."

"How found you that out, Luca?" demanded our hero.

"From that officer you heard here the other night. I did him good service once, and, for once, I have met gratitude. My bondage being broken by the death of Passarini, the Senators, I hear, mean to insist on my taking fresh oaths, which, if I refuse, they, no doubt, intend rewarding me for the past with a lodg-

ing for life beneath the leads of San Marco. I carry in my breast too many secrets. To-morrow night I am to be summoned to take the oaths; but to-morrow night, please the Divine will, we shall be without the Venetian territories. I have been called again to the young Count. I do not think he suspects me; but, so deadly is his hate to you, Signor, that he leaves no stone unturned to entrap you. He has offered me two thousand dollars for your person; but he does not enter into my plans for your seizure. The officials will not be sent here; and, worse than all, I cannot gain any insight into his plan of proceeding, further than that to-morrow I am to be, at a certain hour, on the bridge of the Rialto.

“After parting from the Count, I proceeded to alter my plans. There are in Venice several very fast boats, called Scampavias. They are manned by Istrians, who carry on a contraband, but successful, trade with this city. I took Juliano with me to a noted *locando* where

these men meet. Juliano has succeeded in hiring one of their boats. He knows the captain of her, and says you may trust your life to the faithful performance of the man's engagements. Besides, he is to have an ample reward. Now, Signor Paoli, you must have full confidence in me."

"I have, Luca," returned the Corsican. "Say on."

"Both our lives, Signor, are at stake," resumed the Bravo; "for I would sooner die a thousand deaths than renew my oath. I can count on help in this need; but I may not either betray names, or the means to be employed. I will now give you instructions how you are to perform your part. I know it is not easy to startle you, Signor. Nevertheless, you must leave this mansion to-morrow, disguised in my garments and mask."

Paoli looked somewhat astounded.

"I am a tall man, Signor," resumed Luca,

“but you are taller, though the difference would not be perceived when we are not together. Now, the costume you will wear is well-known to all the spies and officers of the Government. Should any one, addressing you, hold his hand thus”—Here the Bravo performed the signal—“you then make this private signal”—showing Paoli another—“and pass on without speaking. After you have made that signal, no officer or spy of St. Mark will venture to address or question you. Mix with the procession in the square; and when you reach the quay where they embark, leave them, and proceed to the other side, or east mole, where the fishing-craft are moored. Lift your arm above your head, thus, and immediately one of the gondoliers will return your signal. You may then enter his boat, and leave the rest to him. He knows what to do. Now, Signor, do you perfectly understand the part you have to perform?”

"Perfectly," returned Paoli, rehearsing the signals to the satisfaction of the Bravo. "I have no fear of failure, if, as you say, no question will be put to me."

"No fear of that," returned the Bravo; "when I make that signal to an officer of St. Mark, it denotes that I am on a special and secret service. In fact, you can have no idea of the intricate system of espionage adopted by the rulers of St. Mark. You must not open your lips to the gondolier into whose boat you enter, for he is one of the gondoliers of St. Mark disguised; but he is quite ignorant of my intentions, and simply obeys directions already given to him."

Most part of that night was passed by Paoli in conversation with the Bravo. The next day, having slept a few hours, our hero was attired in the dress of the Bravo—a costume immortalised by Titian. His hat, and plume, and mask, were in the genuine bravo style,

and he carried his good sword beneath the long, sable mantle which enveloped his figure.

Leaving the mansion, he found himself in the open air.

"Follow that causeway to the end," said Caffagiola, "you will then find yourself on the borders of a canal, whence you can perceive, in the distance, the bridge of the Rialto. In one hour more, we meet, please God, again."

And diving beneath the low arch, Paoli was left alone.

With all his hardihood and daring, the Knight could but feel somewhat agitated as he advanced into the city. At first, only a solitary person or so of obscure rank passed, and paid no attention whatever to him. But, as he gained the borders of the canal, he fell in with numbers hurrying to the Square of St. Mark. The canals were covered with gondolas; and, so anxious did every one seem, to

reach the scene of the festivities, that he passed along unheeded. Gaining confidence, he proceeded leisurely to the Bridge of the Rialto. As yet, he had not passed a single officer of the Republic ; at least, so he thought. But as he afterwards found out, they were all disguised as citizens ; for, just as he reached the foot of the bridge, a man in a plain brown cloak and hat, unmasked, passed across him, and placing his hand upon his left shoulder, looked him full in the face. At first, not expecting an officer of St. Mark, in the attire of the person who thus passed him, Paoli was moving forward ; but, instantly recollecting himself, he placed his left hand on his right shoulder, and walked on. Before he had measured a hundred yards, our hero had to repeat the signal twice. The last time he did so, the official—instead of passing or remaining stationary—to his surprise, followed close after him. Not liking this, Paoli turned into a narrow causeway, out of the crowd, in order to

see if the man still followed him, and, to his vexation, found that he did. As he approached, Paoli instantly placed his hand upon the hilt of his sword. The man was masked, and wrapped from head to foot in a black mantle.

Paoli paused : the stranger came close to the Corsican, and, in a low voice said—

“ Follow me.”

Rather surprised, if not alarmed, Paoli repeated the signal. The stranger, in an impatient manner, uttered a smothered oath, and, raising his mask for an instant, looked the Knight in the face, saying—

“ Now follow me.”

Paoli was thunderstruck. He recognized the face at once : he had often seen the stranger in the society he had mingled in when residing at the Tiepolo Palace, and he knew that the individual who confronted him, was the son of Count Passarini ! Before he had time to recover from his astonishment, a

Capuchin friar, bulky and unwieldy in person, with his hood drawn completely over his features, and carrying a well-filled wallet on his shoulders, stepped up between Paoli and the young Count. The friar whispered something in the ear of the Count, who immediately caught him by the arm. Paoli, instantly recovering himself, passed on, leaving the two conversing.

He soon regained the crowded thoroughfare, and found himself mixed up with the giddy multitude that filled the great square of St. Mark to overflowing. The procession was moving on, and Paoli, after answering two more signals, followed it to the place of embarkation, astonished beyond measure, at his rencounter with the son of Passarini, and amazed at the interposition of the Capuchin friar, who had thus, in the very nick of time, saved him from discovery. Our hero paid little attention to the mummery going on before him.

At length, he got to the quay ; and, crossing over to the deserted eastern side, he perceived the skiffs, and four gondolas, just as Caffagiola had described. Advancing to the brink of the quay, he made the desired signal, which was immediately returned by one of the gondoliers reclining on the platform of his boat. Paoli was turning to descend, when his gaze become fixed upon four persons, who, at that moment, also advanced to the steps leading down to the gondolas. The two first were the young Count Passarini, the huge Capuchin, and two strangers in long mantles and masked, with the badge of St. Mark on their right arm.

“ Are we betrayed or discovered ? ” thought the Knight. For a moment he remained rooted to the spot ; but, recollecting that to hesitate in following the instructions of Caffagiola was ruin, he resolved, let what would happen, to follow them to the letter. Calmly descending the steps, he entered the gondola, when, to his no little surprise, the Capuchin,

the Count, and the two masked officers also came on board, without uttering a word ; but Paoli perceived the dark eyes of the Count through the mask fixed upon him.

“Then the game is up,” muttered the Knight to himself, with bitterness, and clasp-
ing the hilt of his sword with a firm grasp.
“Yet it will cost a life or two before I become
an inmate of their accursed dungeons. Better
die.”

A strange silence was observed by all. The
gondolier seemed no way surprised at his in-
creased freight ; but, taking to his oar, impelled
the light boat from the quay. Paoli, the
Count, and the unwieldy Capuchin, sat within
the awning ; the two officers without.

They had proceeded something more than
two hundred yards into the lagune, when the
Count, rising, said aloud (placing his hand
within his vest, and grasping something at the
same time.)

“Now then !”

Paoli sprang to his feet ; but the words had hardly left the lips of the Count, than his throat was clasped in a grasp of iron, by the Capuchin, and the same instant the gondolier was dragged, almost choking within the awning of the boat by one of the officers, whose mask fell from his face, and Paoli, in a voice of joy and amazement, exclaimed—

“ Pulini ! ”

“ Gag them, gag them, quick ! ” muttered the Capuchin, throwing back his cowl, and tossing a gag to Pulini. Caffagiola, for it was he himself, managed the instrument like an old hand ; so, in an instant, the Count lay gagged and bound on the bottom of the gondola.

The boat, in the meantime, proceeded rapidly into the Lagune, impelled by the vigorous strokes of the other officials. Paoli was so completely amazed that all he could do was to press the hand of the delighted Pulini, who,

with Caffagiola's assistance, soon had the gondolier by the side of the ill-starred Count.

"This time, Signor Paoli," exclaimed Caffagiola, "fortune, when reduced to the last extremity, favoured us."

While speaking, the *ci-devant* Bravo commenced unloading his person of sundry articles; and, casting off his entire load and disguise, appeared in the simple costume of a citizen. At that moment, the gondola was brought to a stand-still; and, to the fresh surprise of the Corsican, the cheerful, open countenance of Juliano, the gondolier, who had hitherto impelled the boat, entered the awning.

Paoli shook the poor fellow's hand with sincere pleasure, saying—

"What a fortunate fellow I am to possess three such trusty and faithful friends!"

"By the blessed Saints, Signor, I thought it all up with us a short time back. But,

uncle," turning to Caffagiola, "here is the Scampavia coming up with a fine breeze. What shall we do with those two?" pointing to the struggling forms of the Count Passarini and his accomplice.

"You may ungag him now, boy," said Caffagiola. "We are beyond danger from his shouts, were he ever so strong in the lungs. Besides, I wish to bid him farewell, and send back my curse," he added, bitterly, "to them who blackened my name, and kept me in cruel bondage and infamy for fifteen long years."

As Caffagiola spoke, he stooped, took the poniard from the vest of the Count, cast off the bonds, and displaced the gag from his mouth. Slowly, the Count rose, casting aside his mantle, while his chest heaved with renewed rage and pain of breathing from the effect of the gag. For several moments, he stood facing Paoli, unable to utter a word, but with eyes darting defiance. Without paying the slightest heed to Caffagiola, who remained with

his arms folded watching him, he addressed the knight, in a calm, steady voice, saying—

“Signor Paoli, you have escaped my vengeance. Fortune has favoured you. Had she favoured me, in four and twenty hours from this you would have died under the torture. I had a right to seek vengeance on the murderer of my father.” (Paoli’s face flushed.) “Nay,” resumed the Count, “hear me yet a moment. You are a Knight, and bear a character for daring deeds. I demand from you, now, not satisfaction for the usage I have received, for in that I do not blame you ; but I demand a meeting, where you please, either to fall by your hand, or avenge my unfortunate father.”

“Signor Count,” replied Paoli, struck by the tone and manner of the Venetian, who was a noble-looking youth, and accounted in Venice a most skilful swordsman, but of a licentious, and reckless disposition, “Signor

Count, allow me first to set you right. You have styled me a murderer. The accusation is false; no weapon of mine, or weapon of any sort, terminated your father's life. The death he met was richly merited. An innocent family plunged into misery, and accused of crimes, the invention of his own brain—"

"Sir Corsican," fiercely interrupted the Count, "I want no history of the past. If you slew not my parent with your own hands, you—you—and no other, caused his death. I again demand from you, as a man, satisfaction at the sword's point. Let the meeting be without the territory of Venice."

"Be it so, Sir Count," responded Paoli.

At that moment, the gondola struck against the side of some object, and Caffagiola said—

"Signor Paoli, there is no time to lose now. Here is the vessel that will, in a few hours, bear us beyond the territories of this accursed Republic. Count Passarini," continued the

Bravo, turning to the young noble, "you must accompany us yet a few hours. You can then land in this gondola. As to your mad notion of revenging your father, who, himself, was a double murderer—Ah, you may start and frown, and clench your hand. I say it, that knew it well, though I absolve you from any participation in his crimes—you might as well fence with the moon as seek satisfaction with your sword from that noble Signor. He will not slay you, that I know ; for though you meant him evil, you have done him no injury, thanks to Dame Fortune for once."

"Dog ! worm !" exclaimed the Count, passionately, and grinding his teeth. "I bandy not words with such as thou."

"You are right, Count," retorted Caffagiola, with a bitter smile. "Caffagiola, the Bravo, is too honest a name to be mixed up with the polluted one of Passarini."

Paoli, who, to a certain degree, pitied the young Count, now followed Caffagiola and the

rest into a fast-sailing Scampavia, manned by six Istrian sailors; and, bending her low gunnel beneath the rippling waves, under the pressure of two enormous latine sails, the gondola was taken in tow, the sheets were slacked, and the fast boat flew over the surface of the lagune like a dolphin. Paoli paced the deck conversing with the overjoyed Pulini; while the Count, leaning against the mast, gazed abstractedly on the rapidly diminishing towers and spires of lordly Venice.

The Lido was passed; and the bark bounded over the sparkling waters of the Adriatic. Then, by the directions of Caffagiola, she shot up in the wind and drew her fore-sail aback.

"Now, Sir Count," said Caffagiola, "you may, with the gondolier, gain the shore. The water is smooth, and the distance short."

The Count approached Paoli, saying—

"Name your time and place. If it were a thousand miles from the Venetian territory, I will forfeit life, or meet you."

"Sir Count, you shall have your wish ; and the sooner this affair is finished the better. My time, at this moment, is of deep importance to me. Name any town twenty miles without the territory of the Venetian States, and let it be three days from this. You may be attended by any friend you please."

The Count appeared to think for a moment, and then said—

"I shall be in Rovigo three days hence, and will expect you."

Without another word, he descended the side of the boat, and wrapping himself in his mantle, the gondolier threw himself on the seat, and, in a few moments, the light boat was rowing rapidly towards the Lido.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLIGHT.

AFTER the departure of the Count Passarini, the Scampayia was put before the breeze; and rapidly the barrier of the Lido faded from their view.

From Caffagiola, Paoli requested an explanation of the late events, which had so nearly threatened to defeat their projects of escape.

"Knowing, Signor," began Caffagiola, "what a trifle might upset my plans, I prepared myself accordingly. I disguised Juliano and

Pulini as officials of the lowest grade—men employed in prowling the city from morning to night, to watch any popular feeling among the lower orders. I myself determined to follow your footsteps closely, disguised as a burly Capuchin, desiring Juliano and Pulini to keep me continually in sight. When the young Count, who, both as a member of the Council of Forty and chief officer, knows all our signals, stopped you, I was not a little agitated, for I was close to you. You may imagine that *you*, instead of me, might have been disguised as a Capuchin, and have incurred less risk. But not so; four times was I stopped and examined by spies of the Count, who were stupified, on my lifting my cowl, to behold a second Caffagiola, for they had seen you disguised in my clothes. Nevertheless, I mystified them completely. But as I was saying, when the Count made you the signal, I was startled, for I knew him at once, and

felt satisfied he would address you. He did so ; my determination was then made.

Catching him by the arm, I whispered—‘ I am Caffagiola.’ With a start of amazement, he at once eagerly said, ‘ What means this ? Who, then is yonder man in your garments ? I instantly replied, and with perfect calmness, ‘ Your victim and my prize, the Corsican, Paoli.’ ‘ Holy, Paul, then,’ said the Count, yonder are two officers. Forward, and seize him.’ ‘ Softly, Count. You know not that man’s powers. I have him safe. Those two officers are obeying my commands. We are following him. He will enter a gondola at the east pier ; and he thinks the gondolier is in his interest. I have changed him. We will enter the same boat with him, and shall then be five to one ; and I am no child at a struggle. On the water, he cannot escape us ; but here, in this crowd, and with his strong arm, he might.’ ‘ By Heavens ! you have acted well and wisely, Caffagiola. Follow him. Once

bound and gagged, the thousand ducats are yours.' 'I have the materials here,' I said, in a half laugh, shewing him the iron gags and wrist-bands which I intended for himself. 'But how,' asked the Count, with a sudden start, as we slowly followed you, how got he your garments, and above all the secret signals?' 'By bribing,' I replied; 'an official of the lowest grade is his instructor. I have him in custody.' 'Good,' bitterly replied the Count; 'before the next sun sets, he shall die a death of torture. But how got he your garments?' he again demanded. 'They are not mine,' I answered; 'only made as near as possible to match. This project of escape, I find has been the invention of my ill-starred nephew Julianio.' 'Ha! is it so?—then he—' 'Nay, Signor Count,' I interposed, as if anxiously. 'You must be satisfied with letting the poor youth escape from Venice. He is only faithful to a kind master. You cannot blame me. You must promise me that, or I stir no

further.' I do believe this pretended interest in Julianò blinded the Count more than anything else. 'Be it so,' responded he; 'and just then you made the signal to the boatman.' 'Now heed me well, Caffagiola,' said the Count; 'this man is powerful and determined. There is no use in risking life. We must take him suddenly. When I say, *Now then*, do you throw yourself suddenly upon him, and we four will assist.' As we entered the gondola, I whispered your squire, 'The moment you hear the words, *Now then*, seize the gondolier, and prevent him from shouting.

"Thus, Signor, we completely mastered our enemy when I feared the most. But, Signor, if you give the Count the meeting he is mad enough to demand, we must be wary; for I suspect he will yet try some treachery against you."

"I have no fear of that whatever," said our hero. I have always heard the young Count

spoken of as a very high spirit ; and the most expert Cavalero in Venice with the small sword."

In less than four hours, the Scampavia cast anchor off Puelfo, the village where Paoli had left his horses.

"We must not loiter even here, Signor," said Caffagiola, as they prepared to land. "A fast galley would reach this in an hour or two after us. You had better therefore ride on to Rovigo. I will take up my wife and children, and sail in an hour for Ravenna, as we settled last night. There I shall await your arrival. But I again say, be cautious with this Count. I have no faith in any Venetian where vengeance is lurking in his heart."

"Have no fear, Luca. I stand on terra firma now, beyond the reach of the long arm of San Marco. With my good steed, and my trusty sword, and my backful squire, I feel equal to a host. Giuliano goes with you. So

farewell for five or six days; after that, when we meet, we will arrange our future proceedings."

The fact is that during the hours of the night passed in the Bravo's mansion, Paoli had defeated every argument which Caffagiola had used to prove that no other course was now left him than to get to some distant part of Italy, and begin the world again. The fear that some one might hereafter recognize him as Caffagiola the Bravo, haunted and tormented his mind. Paoli showed him that to no other part of the world could he go with greater safety to avoid that imaginary risk, than to Corsica. There, our hero insisted on bestowing upon him a small fief on his own estate. This would support him comfortably, in addition to his own exertions. With respect to little Guido, Paoli resolved to rear and educate him, and take charge of his future fortunes.

As to Juliano, he was the merriest and happiest of the whole party. No sooner out of sight of the towers and palaces of Venice, than a vast load seemed to be taken from his breast—

Having settled with the host of the venta, where he had left his horses, and rewarded Pietro for the good care he had taken of them, our hero delayed no longer ; but proceeded at once to Rovigo, where he remained three days ; but as no tidings of the Count reached him, he left the town caring very little about the matter. On reaching the place appointed as their rendezvous, he found Juliano anxiously awaiting his arrival.

“ All safe and well ? ” demanded Paoli.

“ All, Signor, and extremely anxious for your arrival. Indeed my uncle was so uneasy that he felt inclined to start for Rovigo. I, myself, Signor, never imagined, for a moment, that the young Count would keep his appointment.”

‘You were quite right, Juliano,’ returned the Count. “I had much the same opinion. Now show the way to the best locanda. Tomorrow you must mount and travel as quickly as possible to Castle Baldo, with letters to Count Steno, and the Signor Alviano, as I do not wish to take them by surprise. In the mean time, I shall be able to make arrangements, and procure a vessel to carry your uncle and family to Corsica. But first of all, I must procure funds, and write to Pisa for a supply. Perhaps, however, I may find some merchant here connected with the Pisan Bank. If so, our movements will be much expedited. And now let us to the albergo.”

CHAPTER VI.

OLD FRIENDS.

INTO a noble saloon of the Castle Baldo, we must now beg our readers to accompany us. It was summer; the windows of the saloon were open, and looked out upon a long range of terrace. From this terrace, a magnificent prospect was obtained over that beautiful, but somewhat stormy, lake which now bears the name of Garda.

Though the residence of Count Steno was called a Castle, it did not in the least resemble

an edifice of that nature. It certainly was erected where Castle Baldo once stood; but the Count, Venetian like, had remorselessly removed all trace of the old ruins, except one solitary tower—which was preserved as an armoury—and built a mansion according to the Venetian taste of that period. Beneath the terrace, ran a noble park leading to the borders of the lake; and, at the back of the mansion, ascending a gently rising ground, were extensive and tastefully arranged gardens.

Walking along one of the many serpentine paths through the shady park was a graceful cavalero richly attired, even for that time and place. His plumed hat, he carried in his hand; and, as he bent his head, covered with bright chesnut ringlets, he appeared to be earnestly pleading some urgent matter to a stately and lovely girl by his side. The cavalero was Ugolino Carrara, nephew to the reigning lord of Padua, and the maiden, Paulina Tiepolo, who had consented, after some struggle of

heart, and to please a beloved father, to be betrothed to the young and amiable Signor now walking with her.

To return to the saloon: Seated near a table, sat the Signor Alviano, no longer emaciated and care-worn, but hale and well for his years. He was busy writing letters to various correspondents in Italy. His courier had returned from Capraja some time and had brought the melancholy tidings that his beloved brother was no more. The inheritance of the Crusader, therefore, remained for the last Damari to arrive and take possession. The podesta of Capraja, a kind and worthy man, held everything sacred for the heir, should he ever return. The courier had also brought intelligence that chased the white rose from the cheek of Agnes, and allowed the red proudly to shew its triumph upon the cheek of the maiden; for the courier had heard in Capraja that Corsica had almost recovered her freedom, Bastia alone remaining in

the power of Genoa ; and that the leader of the Corsicans was Giacinto Paoli. To describe the delight of father and daughter, would be impossible. Everything was rapidly arranged for their departure for Capraja, whence a messenger could be dispatched to Corsica.

How Paoli had got to Corsica, it was utterly impossible for father or daughter to conjecture ; nor whether he had been first to Venice to look for them (for Agnes well knew the daring spirit of her lover would brave the risk of entering the city), or, whether he had first landed on the shores of his native land to free it from her detested enemies. All was conjecture. Satisfied, however, that her lover was at length heard of, the faded beauties of Agnes Alviano returned.

Agnes was seated opposite her father in the saloon of Castle Baldo, writing also to her loved friend the Signora Tolmeo, who was then in Pisa. The letter was an earnest re-

quest that she would join them in Lucca and accompany them to Capraja. When Agnes and her father were seized by orders of Passarini, the Signora Tolmeo was left perfectly at liberty to go whither she pleased. Distracted at the fate of Agnes—an unknown fate to her—she remained several weeks dangerously ill at the palace of the Marchese Tiepolo. At length, sad and dispirited, she proceeded on a visit to her relations in Pisa, despairing ever to hear more of Agnes whom she loved with all the fondness of a mother.

Not to detain our readers in this part of our narrative, we will briefly say—that the Signor Alviano and his daughter, after an affectionate farewell from the generous Count and Countess Steno and a most tearful adieu from the betrothed Paulina, departed on their journey. On reaching Lucca, they found the Signora Tolmeo, anxiously awaiting their arrival. After a week's rest—for the journey in those

times from Garda to Lucca was not performed as now—they sailed in a light bark for Capraja, where they were received with enthusiasm by the simple, but attached, natives, who had always been famous for their devotion to their seigneurs. Here the first thing they learned was that Corsica was entirely freed from her yoke, and that General Paoli, supposed dead, was alive and actually, at that moment, Governor, or Podesta, (the latter being the title used in Corsica at that period) letters were sent by Alviano, now Marchese Damari, to General Paoli, for his son. The return of the messenger brought kind and congratulating letters from the general, stating that his son, the moment the liberty of his country was achieved, had sailed for Pisa to proceed to Venice in search of them.

Again, the cheek of Agnes blanched.

“Surely,” she exclaimed, “he will incur some risk in venturing into Venice. How unfortunate !”

"Nay, my child," replied the Marchese, "Providence has been most bountiful. Murmur not at this slight check to our present most fortunate lot. When we recollect that, some few months back, I was a banished, proscribed man, living in a fearful dungeon, my beloved child torn from my embrace——"

"Dearest father," interrupted Agnes, throwing herself into his arms, "forgive your erring daughter. We have, in truth, been highly favoured. I will murmur no more, but wait with patience and resignation for the time when it may please Providence to restore to us him whom we despaired of ever again seeing."

Some six months after the departure of Agnes from Castle Baldo, Paulina Tiepolo became the wife of Ugolino Carrara, and, shortly after, accompanied her husband to Padua. The Marchese and Marchesa Tiepolo were on a visit, with their son-in law, when, one morning, Count Steno entered the saloon with an open letter in his hand. He seemed con-

siderably elated, and immediately exclaimed to the Marchese—

“Here’s news! Passarini is dead, found drowned, like a blind puppy, in the lagune.”

“Drowned!” echoed the Marchese, starting up, and looking with astonishment at his son-in-law.

“Even so,” responded Steno; “and that is not the whole of it. That glorious fellow, Paoli, who daringly entered Venice, to look after the fate of his betrothed, way-laid Passarini on the lagune, and the villain trying to stab him, fell overboard, and was drowned. It was discovered that Paoli was the cause of his fate. Endeavours of the most crafty and treacherous kind were made to apprehend him; but, by the subtle assistance, of Caffagiola the Bravo Paoli escaped from Venice, despite all the power of the mighty Council. Oh, how the beards of the mysterious Ten will wag at being thus baffled!”

“But where, in the name of wonder,

Michaello," exclaimed the Marchesa, "did you gather all this strange intelligence?"

"From this letter," replied the Count, "brought by our once merry gondolier, Juliano. It is written by Paoli, whom he left at Eglino. The Knight, himself, will be here in a few days. He first was to stop a day or so at Pisa; but, poor fellow, he will meet a disappointment, for he fully expects to find Agnes and her father here."

"How rejoiced I shall be to see him," exclaimed the Marchese Tieopolo. I love him as a son."

Though our hero felt the disappointment severely, on arriving at Castle Baldo, and finding that his betrothed and her father had departed for Capraja, yet he experienced a feeling of intense pleasure in embracing those dear and kind friends to whom he owed so much. He heard, with profound astonishment, of the transformation of the Merchant Alviano, into the Marchese Damari, and, that, after all,

the Marchese was of Corsican extraction, and united, by marriage with the Paoli family, his father having wedded one of the heiresses of Ficaoli—a Paoli.

Though Paoli was surprised, Pulini, his squire, was not. He had recognized the merchant the very moment he beheld him enter the cabin of Paoli's galley in Byzantium. When a youth of sixteen or seventeen years of age, Pulini remembered the old Marchese Damari and his two sons visiting our hero's grandfather at their mansion at Ficaoli. The young Damari was then about three-and-twenty. Pulini, the foster brother of Giacinto's father, often accompanied the youths to the chase, as a guide over the wild glens and mountains of Corsica. Pulini never forgot his features. As Paoli quitted the cabin to receive Pisani, the merchant spoke to the squire, and briefly stated to him his reason for remaining unknown, requesting the worthy

squire to keep his secret, which he faithfully did.

After spending eight days with his devoted friends, the Knight bade them farewell. They met with delight, and parted with deep regret, but with the intention of meeting again. Juliano did not leave without substantial proofs of the Marchese Tiepolo's generosity.

Paoli now set out for Pisa, where he chartered a light bark to carry him and his followers to Capraja. He found Luca Manifesto and his family so much improved in appearance—as scarcely to be recognized. Mariana Manifesto was still a very beautiful woman, and her husband, now that his mind was relieved, a remarkably fine, soldier-like looking man, in the prime of life. But misery, and torture of mind, at the bondage he was enduring—with a total neglect of person, rendered it scarcely possible for any one to imagine they beheld the individual who had

acted the horrid part of the Venetian spy and bravo.

Giacinto Paoli felt much pleased with the manners and appearance of his *protégés*, and particularly so with their daughter, an interesting girl about sixteen years old.

The whole party embarked towards evening. The breeze being favourable, they gained the mouth of the Arno, and passed the shallows that even then rendered its navigation intricate. During the night, however, the wind died completely away, and a thick, grey mist crept over the waters, enveloping them in its embrace. But when the sun rose, a light air from the land wafted them onward; and Paoli, impatient and restless, ascended to the after deck, or poop, as it was then styled. For all the small, and many of the larger craft of that period were open in the waist and only the poop and forecastle were decked.

Pulini was already there, leaning over the

side, and looking towards the quarter where he expected soon to see his native land.

"This mist will speedily clear, Signor," said he, as his master came to his side. "We cannot be more than a league or so from Capraja."

The squire was right. As the sun rose, so also did the vapour, which curled and wreathed, and then, as the light air increased and filled the lofty latine sails, the mist was swept from the face of the deep, and the bright, unclouded sun shone out over the sparkling waters. Within three miles of them, lay the home of the Damaris; and Paoli felt his heart beat quicker as his gaze rested on its singularly rugged outline. Beyond it to the westward, distant only twenty miles, rose the lofty mountains of Corsica—the summit of Monte Rotundi covered with perpetual snow rising up clear and distinct in the pure bright blue of the sky. Off the island of Capraja, were several fishing-craft lying at anchor.

They rapidly neared Capraja, and soon its strong and imposing fortress became visible as they opened a bluff head of the island. On the keep of the castle was a lofty standard; and, as the voyagers approached the mouth of the rude outer-haven, an immense flag was hoisted on the standard: it blew out with the then stiff breeze, and Paoli, whose eyes were fixed upon its fluttering folds, suddenly caught the arm of his squire with a grasp as if of iron.

"By Heavens!" exclaimed the Knight, "that is the banner of Genoa—there is no mistaking it. Can it be possible that this island is in possession of our cursed foes?"

"It will never do," suddenly exclaimed Pulini, "to run thus into the enemy's jaws. Put down your helm, man, and tack. Look, Signor, there is a ponderous chain across the inner-harbour over to the tower under the fortress.

For several moments, Paoli remained electrified at this new obstacle raised up against him. Could the Genoese have again invaded Corsica? was his first thought. The Tartana now sailed slowly out from the bay. Luca Manifesto and Julianio not exactly understanding the cause, and quite ignorant that the banner which blew out so ostentatiously, from the standard on the ramparts, was a hostile one.

Turning to the equally surprised padrone of the Tartana who was then at the helm, Paoli, in a few words, let him into the secret of his change of purpose, requesting him to put his craft along-side one of the fishing-boats they passed in coming in.

This was soon done; and the fishing-boat being hailed, came along-side. A stout, hardy-looking Caprese stood up and civilly inquired if they wanted fish, as they had some fine red mullet, for which fish the sea around Capraja and Corsica had been

famous so far back as the time of the Cæsars.

"We will willingly take your fish, friend, and pay you well for them, if you will afford us a little information. Your island, I see, is in possession of Genoa; at least, the flag of the republic is hoisted over the fortress."

"Yes, curse them and their flag!" replied the Caprese. "The island is in possession of a band of devils; for not contented with using sorcery and magic," (and the man crossed himself devoutly), "they have plundered us of everything, and illtreated our wives and daughters. They even rob us poor fishermen (when we return in the evening) of a third of our labours, *maladetto bestias* that they are!"

"Make your minds easy, friends," said Paoli, rather startled at the man's account. "You shall have help soon, and from a quarter you have a right to expect help from, that is Corsica."

The man looked eagerly into the face of Paoli; for he had spoken the last sentence in the Corsican dialect, well known in Capraja.

"Tell me, *amico*," resumed our hero, "how long have these adventurers, for such I suppose they are, held the island? And what do you mean by sorcery and magic?"

"They have gained the island, Signor," said the man, speaking with marked respect, "by sorcery. How else did they contrive to get ashore?—for neither ship nor boat was next morning in the harbour, nor was the chain either broken or let go. So how, except by magic, could three hundred men, in heavy armour, scale our cliffs?"

"Ha! by Heavens, I understand it now," ejaculated our hero, with a start.

He said no more—the Caprese looked surprised; but added—

"This happened near two months ago, Signor."

"And the Marchese Damari and his daughter," demanded Paoli, with intense anxiety. "What was their fate after the subjugation of the island?"

"You seem to know our island and its Chief," said the Caprese, thoughtfully; while his comrade, an old but vigorous man, sat with his hands leaning on the gunnel, and looking, with a puzzled and thoughtful glance, into the anxious features of Paoli.

"True, my good fellow," said he. "I do know your lord and your island well. I am a native of Corsica, and you know that Capraja and Corsica were ever joined against our common foe, the Genoese."

"I thought so," muttered the old man to himself. "God bless you, for I know you; but I will keep my knowledge to myself for certain reasons. Please you, Signor," continued he, aloud, rising and doffing his crimson cap, "I will tell you all you want to know

better than my boy there ; for I happened to be up that night, and saw those men take the fortress with my own eyes."

"Come aboard, then," said Paoli ; " we will take your boat in tow."

The fisherman came aboard, and Paoli took him into the after-cabin, leaving the young man surrounded with auditors on the poop above. Our hero made the fisherman drink a goblet of wine, and then begged him to relate full particulars of all that had happened since the taking of the island.

"I beg your pardon, Signor, for not obeying you at once. But I know you are a Paoli : God bless the name ! It has ever been the watch-word of liberty ; and the moment I recognised you, I said to myself—'Old Antonio will live long enough yet to see that cursed flag that waves so bravely now, trampled under our feet.'"

Paoli was not much surprised at the old

man's recognising him ; for the fishermen from Capraja frequented, almost daily, the harbours and bays of Corsica.

"Knowing who I am, then, my good friend, speak without reserve ; for, with the Divine help, before one month expires, I will free your island from these lawless ruffians."

"Alas ! Signor," said the old man, "even to you it will be more difficult than you imagine, unless—" and the old man crossed himself—"you get into the island the same way those devils did."

"Now let me hear," interrupted the Knight, somewhat impatiently, "how all this took place."

"Well, Signor, you shall hear. It was a rough, stormy night ; and, having indifferently secured my boat, I got up to go down to the harbour. My cot is about a quarter of a mile outside the village ; for I own a little vineyard, and I built a cot in it, which was unusual with us ; for we all live within the boundary-

wall surrounding the village. Well, I was groping my way, for it was dreadful dark, when I thought I heard a singular and hollow sound behind me. I stopped; and again, quite close to me, I heard the tramp of many feet. I crossed myself, Signor, for I was frightened, and crouched down behind a rock, listened, and looked in the direction of the sound. I had hardly done so, when a number of men, near a hundred I am sure, in armour, passed quickly and silently before my sight. I could not utter a prayer, Signor, for my life. Water dripped from my face, and I shook like as in an ague-fit. Before I could bring myself to move from the spot to return to my hut—for, in truth, Signor Paoli, I thought it was a band of fiends that had passed me—a loud and fierce shout rent the air; and then followed screams and cries of all kinds. I now ran towards the village, and, as I gained the wall, I saw, by the flame of wood brands, hastily lighted, a body of those men facing the gates of

the fortress. My fear, in part, was now gone ; for I saw they must be men, because the garrison—a very small one, as no enemy is ever expected by the land-gate—were surprised—and though they fought stoutly, and we all now, being completely roused, ran for our arms to assist, the gates were in a moment forced, most of its defenders slain, and several of the towns-people wounded. No sooner had the enemy gained the gates than they raised the bridge, let fall the portcullis, and the fortress was gained. Vain was every attempt of ours, the three succeeding days, to regain possession of it. The fourth day, a galley, with two hundred well-armed men, made the harbour. Those in the fortress have the command of the chain, the powerful windlass to raise it being in the lower tower. The chain was let go ; the galley entered and landed her men under the walls of the fortress. Against their united force (nearly four hundred men, in heavy and complete mail) we could do but little. The

strongest and most determined amongst us made a noble defence to save our new lord and his lovely daughter; for, although so short a time amongst us, she has already made herself beloved. Alas! The Castle was taken, plundered, and the Marchese and his daughter carried prisoners to the fortress, where they now remain; and God only knows what these devils of Genoese intend doing."

Paoli had listened patiently to the old man's prolix recital. His thoughts were busy during the time; but he did not interrupt the speaker.

"Did you hear the name? or did you see the leaders of these invaders?" demanded Paoli.

"Oh yes, Signor. We see them now often enough; they have disarmed all the inhabitants, and taken the arms into the fortress. They have even made laws, sanctioned by Genoa, to whom they have sold the island, or will sell it. Twenty dollars, as a penalty, is

imposed on every native found with any kind of weapon on his person, or in his house. This is for the first offence ; but the second time he is convicted of having a weapon, they threaten to hang the offender. A certain quantity of provisions are to be provided daily ; and a third of our fish is taken from us. In fact, Signor, if this lasts three months longer, our Podesta that was, says we must starve."

"But you have not told me the name of their leader," said our hero.

"They call him Signor Andrea Campaldino."

Paoli started, repeating—

"Campaldino ! By the Pope, this is astounding. Describe him."

"He is a well-made man, enough, Signor ; and one side of his face is neither wicked or bad in its expression ; but the other, from a deep scar and the loss of an eye, is disagreeable to look upon."

"By all that's wonderful," ejaculated the astonished Paoli, "the same man! And now, friend, we will part. Here are a few dollars. Keep your own counsel. Say not a word of what has passed this day. Mention not my name even to your son."

'Beg your pardon, Signor; but better take my boy with you. He would risk fifty lives to serve you; and I suspect he remembers you too; for he was in Bastia when you sailed last from that port. He was dying to see you; and, poor boy, he would give you his life. But, though I am his father, I must confess it, before this time to-morrow, every soul in the island would hear of his having seen and talked to you, and that you were coming to deliver the island from her enemies. That's his weak point, Signor."

"Then, in sooth, I must take him with me," said Paoli. "But why not come yourself? you will be of use to me. Have you any objection?"

"Oh, none, whatever, Signor. I wished to offer myself, but was afraid to say so."

"But what will they say when you are missed, *amico*?"

"Oh, that is nothing, Signor. We often go for days and weeks together and fish off Elba, and there dispose of our fish to great advantage."

Paoli immediately ascended upon deck ; desired the padrone to make fast the fishing-boat to a strong hauser, and shape his course, with all sail, for Bastia. Then, calling Pulini, he returned to the cabin of the Tartana, where we must leave him to see after our unfortunate heroine and her father.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Andrea Campaldino gained possession of the fortress and island of Capraja, he was by no means aware that, in the Marchese Damari and his daughter, he would behold the Venetian merchant, Alviano, and his child. The only person who could have enlightened him on that point was his Italian associate Montoni; and he, singular enough, was the only man of the party slain in the attack of the fortress, though many, notwithstanding their

armour, were severely wounded. In the assault on the Damari mansion, he lost several men ; for the natives had time to arm, and were not taken by surprise. When his comrade, Achilles Furiani, arrived from Genoa with reinforcements, he immediately took measures to prevent any sudden rising of the exasperated natives, and completely deprived them of every weapon. He, also, sent over a hundred of the ablest-bodied young men to Genoa to serve as seamen ; and, in return, he received, from the government, the appointment of governor of the island. After having disarmed the natives, and sent away their best men, Campaldino saw at once that it would be utterly impossible to maintain and keep in order the host of greedy adventurers he had tempted to join him in the expedition. Having carried the Marchese and his daughter captives to the fortress, he dismantled the Castle Damari, and conveyed all the furniture (much of which was costly and

brought from Florence and Pisa) to the fortress. He treated his captives with a show of respect; appropriated to them the best chambers, and the best furniture; for he was at once struck by the exquisite beauty of Agnes; and his plans, with respect to them, were not yet formed. His first object was to get rid of his allies. He, therefore, called them together, showed them how impossible it was for them all to subsist on the scanty resources of the island, and offered to divide at once the plunder that had been collected, so that they might return without delay by the galley to Genoa.

This offer was very willingly accepted; for, in truth, the limits they were confined to by no means suited their wild desires and roving habits. The plunder was divided, and the adventurers sailed for Genoa, leaving Campaldino and his lieutenant, Achilles, with not more than two hundred and fifty regular

soldiers of the Republic, and about fifty selected associates of their own.

Having settled all this to his satisfaction, the governor, after surveying the island, saw the remains of the old tower of Cauro, on the west side of the island, overlooking the extent of sea between them and Corsica. This tower he repaired and strengthened, and gave it up to the command of Achilles, whom it suited exactly; for now that Campaldino had acquired the title of governor, the rules of the fortress were rather too strict for his liking. Therefore, about a month after their conquest, Achilles established himself in the tower, where he passed his time in eating, drinking, sleeping, and occasionally making love to the maidens of Capraja, who were, and still are, remarkably pretty. So well, indeed, did Achilles manage the natives, being himself remarkably good-humoured and facetious, that he alone of the invaders was treated with common civility.

Campaldino now turned his attention to his captives, towards whom he observed every courtesy and attention. He allowed them their own servants, and even permitted the podesta, a fine old Signor, of good family, to visit them. In fact, Campaldino thought it possible he might gain the hand of his fair captive.

Though considerable plunder was taken in the Castle Damari, none of those chests full of treasure spoken of by Montoni, were as yet found, though most diligently sought after. Up to this time, he had not mentioned the subject to the Marchese, who, with his daughter, appeared overwhelmed with affliction at their repeated misfortunes. But the Genoese soon saw, by the look of horror with which Agnes beheld him, that her love would never be gained by him. Nevertheless, he resolved to see what the Marchese would say to the insidious offers he intended to make.

Taking an opportunity, when the Marchese

was alone, Campaldino very coolly explained his views. He first of all began by saying he had received orders from the Genoese government, to send the Marchese and his daughter to Genoa to be there retained as state prisoners and hostages. Campaldino exulted inwardly ; when he saw, at a glance, that this intelligence struck the Marchese with horror ; for, in secret, both he and his daughter looked for deliverance from Paoli, on his return to Corsica.

“There is but one way, Signor Marchese, to avoid the execution of these orders, which, I see cause you much pain. I love your daughter.”

The Marchese started with astonishment and disgust. Nevertheless, Campaldino, with perfect self-possession, persisted.

“United to your daughter,” resumed he, “I will dismiss this garrison, restore the island to its original lord, and—”

“Nay,” interrupted the Marchese, this can-

not be. My daughter's affections are already bestowed ; but I will make you an offer which, in a pecuniary sense, will be ample amends for the loss of a maiden's hand, whose heart you could never gain."

Campaldino remained silent, and the Marchese continued : "Allow myself and daughter to embark in one of our fishing-boats for Corsica, or even Livorno, and I offer you the sum of a hundred thousand liras of Genoa."*

"Your offer, Marchese, is princely," returned the Genoese with a very gratified smile; for his thoughts immediatly centered upon the iron chests of treasure gained by the crusader ; "but, allow me to observe, after having collected all the plunder of your castle, and shared it with my followers, as our right by conquest, where could so great a sum be procured as that which you offer me ? I confess that I

* About 5,000*l.* at that period—a large sum then.

will willingly accept the amount mentioned, if you only show, or prove, to me, your power of paying such a sum."

Now the Marchese Damari, after all his trials and all his traffic with the world, was by no means a suspicious or a keen observer of his fellow men. He listened eagerly to the words of the crafty Genoese, who, no sooner declared his willingness to accept the offer, than he called to his daughter Agnes, who was in the next chamber, to bring him his small cabinet. Agnes, accordingly entered, bearing an ivory-and-ebony cabinet.

Campaldino rose and politely handed the maiden a seat. Agnes merely bowed, and was retiring, when the Marchese said, "Your eyes, Agnes, are quicker than mine. Stay a moment with me and Signor Campaldino."

Agnes shuddered every time she heard the name; for her lover, in reciting his adven-

tures to her, had mentioned that very name as designating the leader of the Genoese forces in the invasion of Corsica; and she readily conjectured that their present conqueror might be either his son, or other relative.

"The Signor Campaldino," resumed the Marchese, "has agreed to take ransom, restore us to liberty, and allow us to embark for Italy or Corsica."

Agnes clasped her hands with an exclamation, of joy, while a bitter smile sat upon the lip of the Genoese.

"Open that cabinet my love, take me out the acknowledgements of Signor Filippo Torton, the Pisan banker."

Without thinking of aught but the delight of regaining their liberty, Agnes turned over several papers, picked out one on parchment, and handed it to her father, who, not bestowing a glance upon the document, presented it to the Genoese, saying, you will there, Signor

Campaldino, see a sum lodged in my name of ten times the amount offered you for our ransom."

Campaldino took the parchment and ran his eye over the contents. As he did so, his face grew deadly pale, and then flushed like crimson. Agnes gazed at him in terror. His eye flashed and sparkled with emotion. At length, dropping the document, he fixed his single eye upon the maiden, exclaiming in a voice of exultation, "How is this? Instead of the Marchese Damari, do I behold the Signor Alviano, the Venetian merchant?"

Agnes appeared to be fainting. The Marchese called the Signor Tolmeo from the next chamber to assist his child; and, still somewhat ignorant of the cause of the sudden faintness of his daughter, and the strange, excited tones of the Genoese, said, picking up the parchment, "my daughter has committed a trifling error. That money was lodged in the name of Alviano, which I bore for five and

thirty years, twenty of which I resided in Byzantium. She gave you the old document. Since I succeeded my brother the late Marchese Damari, the money has been placed under my proper name. Here," and the Marchese took a similar paper from the cabinet, "is the proper document."

"So then," exclaimed the Genoese, scarcely heeding the words of the Marchese, but turning to Agnes, and fixing upon her a look of triumph, "in you, the daughter of the *ci-devant* merchant Alviano, I behold the betrothed of my deadliest foe, the rebel, Paoli."

"Yes," replied the maiden, rising to quit the room, and fixing a glance of scorn upon the excited countenance of the Genoese, "the betrothed, not of the rebel, Paoli, but the glorious deliverer of his country from the cruelty, oppression, and treachery of your countrymen."

"I am fortunate, noble lady," returned the

Genoese, with a malicious smile, "in gaining the prize I have; for, leave this fortress, except as the wife of Campaldino, you never shall."

"That day will never arrive, Signor. Sooner than endure, for a single hour, even the name of one so base and cowardly, I will be borne to my grave. Come, dearest father," continued Agnes, taking the arm of her bewildered parent, "let us leave our jailer to the contrivance of plans, which I feel assured Heaven, in its own good time, will defeat."

Campaldino laughed aloud, as the captives left the chamber.

"So, my gentle damsel," ruminated he, "you crow loudly, in truth, and threaten bravely. But, *patienza, patienza*. This time I have the ball at my own foot."

Leaving the chamber, he proceeded to the guard-room, where he found his Lieutenant, Achilles Furiani.

"What's in the wind now, Governor?" de-

manded Furiani, looking into his Commander's countenance. "What has ruffled you?"

"Nothing but the excitement caused by a freak of Dame Fortune, who has turned a spoke of her wheel in my favour at last. By the mass, I have found the treasure we have so vainly sought."

"*Corpo di Bacco!* Do you say so?" exclaimed Achilles, rubbing his huge hands in great glee. "How and where?"

"Why, in the daughter of the Marchese Damari."

The visage of the lieutenant changed into a woful expression. "*Diavolo!* a treasure of beauty I allow, governor; but that is a treasure you can't divide."

"Nevertheless, Furiani," returned Campalino, "as you have hitherto shared my plunder, you shall share in this. But you are in error. I have, in truth, gained a treasure in gold, in addition to the maiden, in securing whom, I shall gratify my vengeance against

Paoli, who I thought had escaped me for ever—”

“*Cento Diavoli!*” was all Achilles could reply; but he looked unutterable things.

“Who, think you, is this Lady Agnes Damari?” demanded the governor.

“Body of the world!” ejaculated Achilles, “I told you I never had a head fit for anything except standing hard knocks, and for defying the strength of a hamper of Cyprus. But as to riddles, I want none of them. That unfortunate rascal, Montoni, who was ass enough to let his brains be knocked out by a crow-bar, was the man for riddles. Speak out, and don’t keep me in suspense. I long for something substantial that will last me for the rest of my life; for I begin to think I shall exhaust the wines of this island before something better turns up.”

The governor then related to his lieutenant the scene that had taken place between him and his captives.

Achilles was more puzzled than ever. How the Marchese Damari could be the merchant Alviano of Byzantium, of when he had often heard Montoni speak, completely stupified him; especially as the past night had been spent in a deep carouse with his associates, who, by great good luck had stopped a vessel the day before laden with Sicilian wines for Bastia; and which Achilles seized upon, giving to the distracted padrone of the Tartano, as a reason for doing so, that he had no business to take in a cargo of wine, especially for a hostile port.

To a question of Achilles as to how it was possible such a transformation could take place as that of the Venetian merchant into the Marchese Damari, Campaldino replied, that with the how he very little troubled himself: it was of no manner of consequence. He was satisfied he held captive a man who actually possessed sufficient wealth lodged in bank, to purchase a principality for them both.

"Of the wealth, you shall have a fair share," added he. "But the maiden falls to my lot alone. In forcing her to become my wife, the dearest wish of my heart will be gratified."

At that moment, the *ci-devant podesta* of Capraja was ushered into the room. The old man, bowed low as the governor, who turning towards him, demanded curtly enough, the cause of his entrance, as it was not one of the days appointed for his visits to the Marchese and his daughter.

"'Tis true, your eccellenza, it is not. But I come to request a favor, hoping you will not refuse to grant it, as it is in a religious point of view I ask this favour, and essential to the happiness of the simple natives of this island."

"Take a seat, Signor," said the governor, and let me hear your request. I by no means wish to be harsh to your countrymen; but let me, at the same time, remind you that the sum, specified by yourself as the tribute I levied, is now two months due."

"Signor—your eccellenza I mean—I come to speak about that also. We are poor, very poor. Nevertheless, we are willing to sacrifice all we possess of value, to keep up old customs."

"Be so good as to explain, Signor Butaficcio," said the Governor.

"Well, your eccellenza, I will do so. In the time of Otho Damari, the Crusader——"

"*Corpo di Bacco!*" ejaculated Furiani, starting to his feet, "I shall be choked with thirst if you carry us back to the times of the Crusader. I will leave your eccellenza to listen to the worthy Signor Butaficcio, and just wet my lips with a flask of the poor wine of this country."

So saying, Achilles, who detested long prosy stories, left the chamber.

"Now go on, Signor Butaficcio," said the governor. My good lieutenant is a remarkably thirsty individual; a disease, brought on, he says, by the scorching he got by wearing

armour under the burning sun in our colony of Pera."

"So it seems, your eccellenza," quietly observed the ex-podesta. "Your worthy lieutenant has declared the Sicilian bark, loaded with wine, forfeited, because she was bound for Bastia."

"It was an error of his," gravely replied the governor, "but I fear it may not now be remedied. It shall not, however, occur again. Such things will happen in conquests, till affairs get into their right place. Vessels that anchor here must be protected, especially as a very good revenue is collected for harbour dues. But pray come to the subject of your visit."

"I was saying, your eccellenza, that in the time of Otho Damari, the Crusader, a frightful tempest and convulsion of the earth took place in this island. The inhabitants thought the island would be swallowed up. Fire burst out of the ground in several places, and a

shower of burning ashes fell all over the country. The Crusader was a pious man, and brought from the 'Holy Land,' when he returned, a piece of the true and blessed cross. In the midst of this frightful convulsion, he took the relic from its case, and also several other blessed relics of the Saints, such as the toe-nail of the blessed St. Agatha, a hair of the head of St. John the Baptist, and several others; and, assembling all the inhabitants, they formed a procession, with the relics in front, and ascended to the Mount, on which now stands the Chapel of this fortress. They placed the relics on the ground, which heaved and rocked every moment; and the Crusader vowed, if the island was saved, to build a chapel on the spot where the relics stood, dedicated to St. John the Baptist—for it was then St. John's eve—to endow it with a yearly sum, to support six friars, and that yearly a procession should take place, on the morning of St. John's eve, by the principal inhabitants of the

island, clothed in white mantles and hoods, and that each person should deposit upon the altar of the chapel the sum of one livre, as an offering, to be laid out in the decorations of the chapel.

“ Well, your *eccellenza*, it pleased Heaven to spare the Island. The Crusader founded the handsome chapel that now stands within the walls of this fortress, which was built afterwards by the Crusader ; he also erected a house within the town, as a convent for the six friars, one of whom daily attends, with the permission of your *eccellenza*, to celebrate mass within the chapel, to the garrison. St. John’s eve now approaches, and the inhabitants of this island, who are a simple, untaught race, and devotedly attached to their old customs and ceremonies, have begged me to solicit your *eccellenza* for permission to visit and pray in the chapel on St. John’s day, and to deposit their annual offerings ; and if granted yearly, they are willing to pay a livre a head

tribute money, to be distributed amongst the soldiers of your eccellenza's garrison. To solicit this permission, is the cause of my intrusion."

The age we write of was in every way a religious and superstitious one. All ceremonies connected with the relics of saints, were eagerly attended by priest, layman and soldier; and none were more ardent in apparent devotion than the lawless bands of adventurers, who were to be found scattered over the face of entire Europe.

Campaldino saw nothing in the wish of the Caprese, beyond a devotional one; nor was there, in fact, any other. Resistance, or any scheme to recover their liberty, was totally out of the question. So vigorous, indeed, was Campaldino's search for arms, that he scarcely left the inhabitants the instruments necessary for their domestic purposes. Besides, all armour, and warlike stores and weapons were deposited in the armoury of the fortress. He

therefore, willingly, agreed to let the ceremony take place, provided the tribute due to him by agreement, was paid three days before St. John's eve.

Greatly pleased at having gained the object of his visit, the Signor Buttaficcio withdrew, bowing to the very floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADVENTURES OF THE ELDER PAOLI.

IN a chamber of one of the handsomest palaces, built by the Genoese in the city of Bastia, late in the evening, sat General Paoli and his son. Our hero had just been relating to his father, who had been appointed, by the united voice of the whole island, their podesta, or governor, a full account of all his adventures since he left the island. They were now consulting and planning an expedition against Capraja.

Our hero was against attempting the re-

duction of the island by an open assault ; for, so strong was the fortress by situation and artificial defences, that resistance, even by a small garrison, might easily be prolonged for weeks, perhaps months ; and during that time, such was Campaldino's hatred and desire of revenge against Paoli, that it was impossible to say what the consequences might be to his Agnes and her father.

“ You are right, Giacinto,” said the General, after a few moments' thought. “ I am inclined to adopt your plan of surprisal, by entering the island through the very passages by which this Campaldino, however he obtained the knowledge, won the fortress. There is this difference, however, and you must not lose sight of it. The present Marchese Damari is a man of peace. Old Buttaficcio, the podesta, though one of the kindest-hearted men living, is no soldier—it is very evident that, bold, high-spirited, and ardently devoted to liberty as the Caprese are, a most negligent guard of the

fortress was kept. Now, Campaldino is a soldier, not only bold and daring, but crafty and suspicious like his father. You cannot expect to find the fortress with its bridge down, its portcullis raised, and scarcely a watch kept. Nevertheless, something may turn up in your favor, which you do not at present see. While you enter the island through that strange range of caverns which you and Count Sampiero discovered when almost boys, I will keep off the island in a galley, with a force sufficient to take the fortress if you fail. By your hoisting a signal, I shall understand you require my assistance. Strange that the son should have an influence over your destiny nearly as great as his crafty father had over mine."

"You promised me, my dear father, that that the first time we had an evening to ourselves you would give me a more minute detail of your adventures than you could possibly do the last time we met. I cannot, at this moment, settle my mind fully upon my expedi-

tion to Capraja ; but in the quiet hours of the night, will bring my confused thoughts to some kind of determination. At all events, I will delay no longer than to-morrow night. I only wait my Cousin Otho's arrival. Now, dear sir, let me hear how you contrived to perform a feat that always, to me, appeared astonishing—namely, your escape from the State prison of Genoa.

“You will find nothing surprising in that part, my son,” replied the elder Paoli. “However, you shall have all my adventures. The getting out of prison was a freak of fortune.

“Mastino Campaldino,” began the General, “was by far the craftiest of all the commanders sent by Genoa into Corsica. He resolved to try bribery and corruption, and, for a time, he was baffled ; for, of all nations, our countrymen set the least value on gold. But just as he was thinking of abandoning this project, the villain Luigi Antonetti fell into his hands

The moment he saw this man, and learned his connections, he was satisfied that his plan would work. The traitor was offered the estates of his cousin Sampiero on certain conditions, and thus he became a spy and traitor. To follow up the plan intended, the villain was allowed to escape, as it were, and was even hunted by the soldiers of Campaldino, while a reward was offered for his apprehension. I received him as a fugitive, and he sold me and his country, by betraying the secret entrance into the citadel of Corte. Campaldino conceived it would be a death-blow to our cause were he to hang those chiefs who fell into his hands at Corte; at the same time he resolved, as a masterly stroke, to send me secretly to Genoa, and give out that he had put me to death. If that did not succeed, he still had me as a hostage, to use as he saw occasion. I was accordingly embarked in a galley sailing for Genoa, and placed in the State prison, one of the strongest fortresses in the Ligurian territory.

There, for two years, I remained, hopeless of ever recovering my liberty, when, by one of those unforeseen events that at times baffle all human foresight, I escaped from durance.

One morning early, the prison was surrounded by a furious and excited mob, composed of all the artizans and lower orders of Genoa, whose amount is wonderful. All the prisons of Genoa were broken into by these fantastic lovers of liberty, who had first murdered as many of their nobility as were opposed to the faction of the Grimaldi, and driven the rest out of the city, elected a new Doge, and by way of finish to this, I am told, not unusual outbreak, determined to liberate all the prisoners without distinction or inquiry. Some of the captives, well known, and of their own party, were carried in triumph through the city; others, myself amongst the rest, were told to shift for ourselves. Astounded by the uproar, confusion, and devastation, I rushed,

as soon as I understood how matters stood, along with a hundred others, out into the streets. I was not very strong, as you may suppose ; and with difficulty made my way amid the mob of rioters. I picked up, in the confusion, a mantle and a cap, with which I invested myself.

“ My first object was to get outside the city ; and, by asking a few questions, I managed to issue forth by the gate leading into that princely suburb, San Pietro D’Arena. What to do next I knew not, being totally ignorant of the country, and without a fraction of money, or an article to convert into money. I was puzzled. On one side of me, rose those magnificent palaces, which, for a league, stretch to the westward, after leaving the city. On the other side, was the glorious sea, sparkling and rippling in the bright sun. If I had had but a boat, and a little water and bread, twenty-four hours would have seen me on my native shores, for a fine breeze of Tramontana

flew over the water I gazed on so anxiously. I walked on, however, resolving to get as far as possible from Genoa ; but, unaccustomed to exercise, I was completely knocked up when I got to the village of Pagia, for so I learned it was called.

“ Seating myself on a rock, I could proceed no further, I looked around me anxiously. At length, I became drowsy with the noise and murmur of the waves on the beach, and the hum of voices from the village. After having dozed awhile, I was roused by a voice close beside me saying, ‘ *Salve, figlio mio !* You look ill and care-worn. Can I assist you ? ’ I turned, startled, to the side where the voice came, and perceived, standing by me, a wandering friar of the Capuchin order. He was a man passed middle age, with a kind and benevolent countenance. He wore a long brown habit, with a hood, simply fastened round the waist by a knotted cord ; his feet and legs

were bare, and over his shoulder, he carried a large and apparently well-filled wallet.

“In truth, *padre*,” I replied, ‘I am sick, weary, and hungry ; and know not where to seek relief from any one of those three evils.’ ‘Nay, *figlio*, Heaven provides help, even when we, miserable sinners, think it most distant. Lo, here am I, sent by Providence to remove those ills of which you complain, because I conceive the two first arise from hunger and thirst. Here are the means to satisfy both.’ The good father quickly sat down by my side and opened his wallet, from which he took sundry eatables, and a small stone jar of very good wine. ‘Now, *figlio mio* !’ said he, with a smile, in the name of the blessed saints, begin. My wallet was filled this very morning at the Palace of the good Countess De Lera, and you are as welcome to share it as my poor brethren of our very poor convent ; for we are of the begging order of Capuchins.’

“I thanked the worthy friar from my heart, for his store was, in truth, most welcome. He eat sparingly himself, and drank not from the jar, which, he said, was only for the sick and weary, but from a clear, sparkling stream that issued from the lofty rocks to lose itself in the sands at our feet. ‘You are not,’ said the friar, ‘one of this land, I know by your tongue, though your Italian is purer than ours. Whence do you come? You look as if you had suffered from long confinement. I had no hesitation in stating the truth to the padre, who listened to my recital with attention and interest. ‘*Figlio mio*,’ said he, ‘I rejoice at your escape. I love not war and the cruelties it leads to. Heaven knows, we ought not to covet the land of the stranger; for what with our own broils and rivalry, we can scarcely keep our own. Worn out and weak as you are, you could never cross our mountains into another territory, and, no doubt, so important a captive will be eagerly sought after. Come

with me to our poor convent. You will be tended with care, and receive part of our homely food; and when you are well and strong, you can depart, and none of us will say—*Whence came ye? or whither do ye go?* Then, in one of our habits, with God's blessing, you will be able to reach a place of safety.' I attempted to thank him, but he stopped me, saying, 'We live, my, son, by charity. If we did not obey, by our practice, that Divine inspiration, could we expect our own wants to be supplied?'

"Assisted by my kind friend I reached his convent, built upon the side of the steep hill behind the sweet village of Pagia. The padre, simply introducing me to his brethren as one who required rest and shelter, led me to his own cell, one of the friars bringing a pallet for me to rest on.

"Here I remained for ten days, which completely restored me. The good padre would listen for hours to my narrative of our struggles

for liberty ; and I faithfully promised, if it pleased God to restore me to my country, and we regained our freedom, I would establish a convent of begging Capuchins on some part of the island. Being now sufficiently recovered, I felt anxious to get out of the Genoese territory. My pious friends furnished me with a Capuchin gown and hood, and a wallet well stored. I embraced the whole fraternity, and could not avoid shedding a tear as I parted from Padre Gavotti, who certainly possessed the real milk of human kindness in his heart. I had studied well my road, from a very fairly-drawn map of the mountains by one of the brethren, for they all, by turns, start on a begging pilgrimage for two or three months.

In a week I made my way to Turin, where I cast off my Capuchin habit, which had supported me the whole time. In that city dwelt several of our Corsican exiles with their families. I was, as you may suppose, received

with open arms. From the Signor Pasquale Rivalora, a Corsican advanced in life, and who had settled with his family many years back in Turin, I learned all that had taken place during my captivity; for you may be certain how my heart panted to gain some intelligence of you, my beloved son. I heard of your gallant resistance; the death of Campaldino by your hand, and your successful escape from Corsica. There was a rumour also that the natives had again risen in arms, headed by your gallant cousin, Sampiero. I need not tell you I burned to be amongst the patriots; and having been furnished with funds by the Signor Pasquale, I made my way over the mountains through Acqui, and reached Nice, where I procured a bark and sailed for Corsica.

“Thus you see, my dear boy, my adventures were simple, and unattended with any risk. Since the fall of Bastia, and the total defeat of our enemies, I have endeavoured to establish a

treaty of commerce and peace with France, and hope to succeed. Genoa, alone, can never hope to cope with us again. We must now take warning from the past, and, following the example of our foes, build defences to our harbours, supply ourselves with arms and warlike stores, and above all, avoid that rock upon which we have hitherto split—dissension and disunion amongst ourselves.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE EXPEDITION.

On a bright, unclouded evening in the latter end of August, a large zebec left the harbour of Mariana, and, with a steady breeze from the westward, shaped her course for Capraja. On board this vessel was our hero, his cousin Count Otho Sampiero, and fifty picked men, amongst whom were Pulini, Luca Manifesto, and Juliano. The two latter had earnestly entreated to accompany the expedition. Luca

Manifesto, after our hero's arrival in Corsica, had been established on the General's estate of Frealo; his son, Guido, resided with his parents; but Paoli determined, the moment he became settled, to take the boy into his own household.

On board the zebec were arms for nearly a hundred men, besides arms for the fifty men selected.

All were in high spirits, and animated with the most sanguine hopes of success. It was the intention of Giacinto to make the island during the night, and before the return of day, land all the men, arms, etc., in the vast caverns known to him. The zebec was then to retire from the island, during the day; and at sun-set, to stand in for the cavern and watch for any of the signals appointed to be made. It was a season of the year when long-continued fine weather prevails in the Mediterranean, interrupted, perhaps only for a few hours, by a thunder-storm.

Antonio, the old Caprese fisherman and his son, returned with them. Their craft, a long and strong fishing-boat, was towed astern, and capable of landing the whole party in two trips.

Count Sampiero was a fine, high-spirited youth, whose bravery had been early displayed in defence of his native land. Like most of the Corsican nobility of that period, he had passed several years on the continent. Those years were spent by the Count, with his powerful kinsman, the Colonna, in Rome.

"It is nearly ten years," observed Sampiero, laying his hand on the shoulder of his cousin, who was wrapt in a fit of thought, "since you, and I, and Pulini, and a hardy crew, visited the caverns to which we are now bound. How little could we imagine that the discovery of these caves, when seeking a place of refuge from a tremendous thunder-storm, would be hereafter of so much consequence. Do you think you perfectly remember the spot?"

"It is scarcely possible, Otho," returned Paoli, "to mistake the singular rock that divides the entrance to the caverns. It was its resemblance to a huge eagle, with its wings extended, that first drew my attention to it; but had you not shot an immense raven, we should never have discovered the caverns behind it, inasmuch as the entrance into those vast dens is so remarkably intricate and insignificant."

"Ah, Signor," exclaimed old Antonio, the Caprese, who was standing by the man at the helm, and who had heard the above conversation, "I know the rock you speak of now; for I have fished for hours close off it, and often observed to my son the tremendous roar of the ground swell within. But that is during the winter. The water within must now be as still as a lake."

"Your late chief," said Paoli, turning to the Caprese, who just then relieved the man at the helm, "was not of a warlike disposition,

but rather inclined towards tranquillity. It is strange that the Genoese never attempted to take the island during his life-time."

"Alas, Signor, for what purpose could those greedy Republicans want our little bit of land, which is not sufficient to give food for its simple inhabitants? As to gold or silver, the Saints be praised, we have but little, and have lived very happily without them. Our young men mostly depart as sailors to various parts of the continent; those that remain, become fishermen, and carry what they take to Elba, Corsica, and oftentimes to Pisa and Livorno."

"Your late chief, nevertheless, was a wealthy noble," remarked Paoli.

"He was a pious and good man, and the Saints interceded for him, Signor. As to wealth, he did possess riches; for his lady was a wealthy Italian heiress; but he spent a great part in building the fortress and chapel. Castle Damari, a noble mansion, was erected, we are told, after the Tuscan mode of palaces, to

please his noble lady. Then all the costly furniture, and mirrors, and grand statues and pictures, were brought from the continent. Alas ! alas ! Signor, those cursed spoilers, that are now in the fortress, stripped the castle of every article, and divided the plunder. Nothing but the bare walls is left to look upon now. Our present chief, Signor, I have heard say, has vast sums of money in foreign parts ; and it is whispered, that these robbers must have heard this, somehow ; or what could tempt such hungry vultures to make a descent upon our little island ?”

“Your island, my good fellow,” said our hero, “is of much more importance than you imagine. In the power of Genoa, it would soon be turned into a place of considerable traffic. It possesses a fine haven, always full of shipping during the winter months, besides being a key to Corsica. Your wine is equal to, if not finer than, any of the Sicilian. There

is a chapel—is there not?—dedicated to St. John, now enclosed within the walls of the fortress, and some ceremony connected with it?”

“Yes, Signor,” replied the Caprese; “very precious relics are contained in a shrine in that chapel. But the annual procession to visit the shrine, will, I fear, be stopped by those *mala-detto* Genoese.”

“Let me see,” said Paoli, thoughtfully, and turning to his cousin; “this is Monday; next Friday, therefore, is St. John’s day.”

“I see, Giacinto,” observed Otho, “you have got some plan in your head with respect to that ceremony and procession to the chapel.”

“Yes, if the procession is allowed to take place,” responded Paoli. “Advantage may be taken of it. All I require is to gain a footing in the fortress. The gates once ours, the rest is easy. But, by all accounts, this entrance,

if not taken by surprise, is almost impregnable. The drawbridge falls over a precipice of nearly a hundred feet perpendicular ; and a ponderous portcullis besides ; and the path to the bridge is so narrow, that only two persons can walk abreast."

"By Jove, there will be something to do," exclaimed Sampiero ; "and report speaks of Mastino as a crafty and skilful commander."

"We must use stratagem, Otho ; otherwise, the siege will be a prolonged one. But, see, the breeze freshens, and the moon rises bright and clear to the eastward. We shall make the island in less than an hour. In fact, it looms now like a dark mass of rock against the moon's rays."

Paoli was not far out. In little more than an hour, the zebec ran in under the high rugged rocks of Capraja ; and, lowering her sails, dropt an anchor. The sea being perfectly smooth, she lay within five hundred yards of the shore.

Paoli immediately manned the boat, and, with his cousin and Antonio, the Caprese, they pulled close into the rocks; for it was on the western shore facing Corsica, that the caverns were situated.

A very short time sufficed to discover the marks. The Eagle-rock was then found; and, having examined the entrance, and fully satisfied themselves they were right, they returned aboard.

In two hours, both men and arms were safely landed on a shingly beach at the mouth of the principal cavern. There being no tide in the Mediterranean, the boat was hauled up only a few feet from the water's edge; and then, prepared torches being lighted, the men cheerfully carried the provisions, arms, and fuel to an inner cavern, of which the immense extent astonished all those of the party who had never seen the place before.

It became very evident, after a few moments' investigation, that it was through these

caverns the Genoese had entered the island : remains of large fires were strewed over the sands ; and one or two broken weapons, such as those used by the Genoese soldier, were also found.

Leaving the men busy in lighting a fire, and preparing a meal, Paoli, with Otho Sampiero, Pulini, and the Caprese, carrying pine-wood torches, examined those wonderful, natural vaults. Some were lofty and beautifully arched, almost leading the beholder to imagine they were the work of man. One cave led into another in an apparently endless succession and variety. At length, Paoli succeeded in tracing, by the marks of feet, and other signs, the passage that led into the interior of the island. It was a narrow, and somewhat crooked and rugged succession of natural stepping stones, in some places, difficult of access, and requiring strength and activity to surmount. There were evident traces that, at

times, the passage served for a mountain torrent to find its way to the sea.

After half an-hour's scrambling, accompanied by a few falls, which threatened at one time to leave them to find their way back in total darkness, they came to the mouth of the passage which was concealed by an entangled mass of various kinds of low and luxuriant underwood. Leaving their torches safely in a fissure of the rock, they pushed their way, with some difficulty, through the brambles, and stood fairly within the island on a hill looking down into a valley of about two miles in extent.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment of Antonio, the Caprese. In a moment, he recognised the hill on which they stood. The moon was then high in the heavens, and threw a flood of silvery light over the whole valley beneath them, while they, standing under an immense and lofty rock that hung over

the entrance of the cave, were in deep shadow.

"This is most strange, Signor," observed the old fisherman. "Had we but known that the Genoese had thus entered the island, they would never, few as they really were, have conquered us that night. We were stricken with fear, Signor; for we thought they were not human beings; and when we did come to blows, we imagined they were protected by sorcery and magic."

"You know the island well, Antonio, no doubt," observed Paoli. "Could you take me from here to the house of your late podesta, without traversing the town or habitable part of the island?"

"You need not be seen by a single human being. To your right, Signor, on the summit of yon hill, about a mile off, you see the Tower of Cauro. There are twenty men in that Tower with an officer. At the foot of this

hill we are upon, lies the road from the Tower to the Castle Damari. You can discern, Signor, its towers rising over that clump of tall trees at the far end of the valley. From the Castle to the town, it is not half a mile. By going to the south of the Castle by a narrow path, you can reach the back of the town, for the houses all run along the beach of the inner harbour; and many of the best residences, especially that of the podesta, have large gardens extending far up the hill above the harbour. I can, therefore, take you in broad day-light without any risk, to the podesta's house by the back of the Castle."

"That will answer my purpose well," returned Paoli. "What say you, Otho, to a stroll to the Castle? It is not more than a mile and half across the valley; and Antonio says there is a direct path at the foot of this hill."

"Most willingly," replied the young Count.

"I shall not sleep this night; and I feel a desire to have a peep by moonlight into the castle of the stout crusader."

Pulini would have said it was a useless risk; but, knowing of old how fruitless it was to advise caution to his somewhat headstrong master, he contented himself by proposing to go with them.

To this, his master objected, and insisted on his and Antonio's return to the caverns, instructing them to place a massive wax torch, which they had brought with them, in a split of the rock at the entrance, and materials to strike a light.

Having thus settled how they were to return, the two young men left both squire and fisherman, and proceeded carelessly down the hill, which was of easy descent, being, in fact, a sheep walk; for, as they went on, numbers of those animals, and also of goats, for which Capraja is famous, started up out of their path.

At the foot of the hill—for neither hedges,

walls, or fences of any kind were in their way, they came upon the road leading from the town up to the Tower of Canro.

It was a still and lovely night, and the moon threw a flood of light over the valley. In half an hour, they came up with the noble belt of trees encircling Castle Damari on three sides. Turning the wood, they reached the front of the Castle, as Antonio had indicated. The building was more after the fashion of the Italian villas than an embattled mansion. Still, the towers and bastions of the Crusader's castle remained, and somewhat oddly, though by no means disagreeably, mixed in with the modern building. Neither ditch, moat, or bridge, was seen. Along a stately façade, ran a row of pillars; and a marble portico, of great height and classic form, gave entrance to the mansion. The large doors were gone, excepting some pieces, which were still attached to the massive hinges. As the young men continued their observations, they perceived

evidences that the mansion had undergone a kind of siege. The pillars, in places, were defaced; the windows, of beautiful form and of stained glass—a rarity at that period, in so remote a locality—were broken and shattered; and signs of desperate strife were still visible everywhere.

“They must have made a very tolerable fight of it,” said Sampiero, “notwithstanding, they thought their enemies gifted with sorcery. Let us have a look at the inside.”

Paoli did not reply, for his thoughts were, at that moment, with Agnes.

Passing beneath the portico, they entered the spacious hall, along each side of which ran a range of marble pillars, supporting a lofty gallery, the further end illumined by an immense gothic window, of stained glass, through which the moon’s rays fell dimly upon all within leaving many places in deep shadow. Between each pillar of the hall, stood the carved figure of a warrior, looking, in the un-

certain light, like the grim guardians of the Crusader's Hall; while above, floated the remains of several torn and defaced banners. This air of desolation affected the young men with sombre thoughts, from which they were startled by the tread of a heavy foot in the porch.

"Keep in the deep shadow," whispered Sampiero. Your figure and height are remarkable. If spoken to, and this intruder be a Genoese, let me answer."

Paoli stepped behind a pillar in deep obscurity, and Otho Sampiero, turning, beheld, standing in the door way, a tall man, in breastplate and helmet; for the moon's rays fell full upon him—from the casement opposite. As Otho turned, a deep, full voice exclaimed—

"What, ho, there! Come forth, who ever you are. No skulking, or, by the mass, if I go in to hunt you out, I'll lay the flat of my sword on your back, in a way that will make

you smart. *Cospetto!* who are you, lurking about here after the hour?"

Quietly drawing his sword, Otho advanced towards the speaker. His attire was, purposely, very simple; and neither armour or arms had he, excepting the plain sword he carried in his hand. Though the stranger was standing in the full light, Otho Sampiero's features and figure were but dimly perceptible.

"And who, the *diavolo*, are you?" exclaimed the man, stepping a pace back. And armed too! How is this? By the immortal Jove, you will pay for your intrusion, or my name is not Achilles Furiani."

"Signor Achilles Furiani, if that is your eccellenza's name," replied the young Count, "I crave your pardon for a poor artist who loves studying the picturesque, like your worship, to taking men's honest rest."

"Studying the devil!" roughly answered the Genoese. "I never studied any thing

more picturesque than a hamper of good wine, or a goodly town to be sacked and pillaged. An artist, are you? How the devil did you get here? What has an artist to do with a sword? If you are a native, which I doubt, for I never beheld you before, you are liable to a fine; first, for being out after the hour allowed; next, a heavier penalty for having a sword. Give me that weapon in the first place, and then follow me. Are you alone? I certainly heard some one speaking, as I was passing."

"We artists, Signor Furiani, often indulge ourselves in speaking when alone. I was talking to the dead."

"*Corpo di Bacco!*" hastily interrupted the Genoese. "You are not in earnest, are you? Is the ghost of the old crusader troubling his old halls?"

"So they say, Signor," quietly, and with a smile, replied Otho. "But I was not talking to so distinguished a ghost; I was merely

apostrophizing the dead, whom, in my imagination, once peopled this mansion. Here is the sword, Signor Achilles. I picked it up, and suppose it must have been left here by some of the late combatants. As to who I am, if you wait till to-morrow, the ex-podesta, Signor Buttaficcio will inform you. In reference to the fines, I freely offer you these ten dollars to pardon my strange habits. The coin will be much better, Signor Furiani, in your pocket than in the public fund, which they would doubtless be to-morrow, when you would be obliged to disclose my offence to your commander.

“Money was one of the idols which the worthy Achilles adored. At the mention of ten dollars, a sum five times the amount of the fine, he rubbed his hands together, and, with a quiet laugh, replied—

“By the mass, worthy artist, if such you are, you are a sensible fellow, notwithstanding

this whim of yours, in studying the picturesque. Ha! ha! ha!"

And he laughed heartily, as the Count quietly placed the money in his huge hand.

"This," resumed he, "is substantial at all events. Keep the sword, my friend. It is of little value, I see; and keep this meeting of ours to yourself. Study away, *amico*. Give my respects to the shade of the Crusader, should he happen to pay you a visit; and, remember—my name is Achilles Furiani; my quarters are in the old town of Cauro; and if you will take the trouble of mounting the hill, I will give you a hearty welcome, (for you seem a very decent and well-bred youth,) and we will contrive to empty a flask or two to our better acquaintance. Now, listen to me. As you live with old Buttaficcio—a relation I suppose, eh? Just say to his pretty niece, Annette, that—" and here the giant heaved a tremendous sigh—"Achilles Furiani is dying

for love of her. *Corpo di Bacco!* I am grown so thin from pining, that the straps of my cuirass have had four fresh holes made to tighten it on me. Adieu, my worthy! The night wears away. Don't forget to visit me."

"Never doubt it," replied Otho, with a smile; "I will visit you, Signor Furiani, and, depend upon it, we will crack something more than a flask between us. *Addio.*"

Furiani repeated his adieu; and, turning away, his figure was lost beneath the deep shade of the lofty trees.

CHAPTER X.

THE EHPODESTA AND HIS NIECES.

AFTER the departure of the Genoese adventurer, Otho Sampiero rejoined Paoli.

"By the Pope, Giacinto," said the young Count, laughing, "that's a monstrous big fellow. I do believe if I, unluckily, had not had the gold about me, I must have measured swords with him."

"You managed admirably, Otho. Any broil would have been ruinous to us. To have slain him, would have betrayed some plot meditated by the natives; and to have carried

him a prisoner to our cave, would have been out of the question ; had I gone forth to meet him, I must have had a contest with him ; for, strange as it may appear to you, that is the very officer who commanded the troop that made me prisoner at Pera. To do him justice, he was humane enough. He sent at once for a leech, and left directions that I should be well tended. I heard his name afterwards, and there is no doubt he would have recognised me at once. But we must be stirring in a few minutes, when the moon will be down and we can then cross the valley without being observed, even should this man suspect you are not what you represented yourself to be. We must, however, guard against discovery to-morrow, and be with the Signor Buttaficcio early, before our worthy Achilles has time to make inquiries."

"Do not be alarmed about that, Giacinto," returned Sampiero ; "the fear of having to share the gold with his worthy commander

will keep him quiet. So now let us be moving."

The young men crossed the valley, ascended the hill, and easily found the entrance to the cave. Pushing back the brambles, they went in and there found Pulini and the others wrapped in their rough mantles and sound asleep. The Squire started to his feet in an instant, with an exclamation against his drowsiness.

"So you would wait for us, Pulini," said Paoli, smiling kindly upon his faithful attendant. "In truth I guessed as much."

After a rough scramble over the difficulties of the path, the party reached the caverns, and found almost all the men wrapped in their cloaks, fast asleep round the dying embers of the fires; for, though the month was August, the vaults were extremely cold.

Luca Manifesto and Juliano were sitting apart, keeping up a good fire, and preparing a sup-

per for their young chiefs against their return.

ho Sampiero being of a lively and high-

spirited disposition, seemed highly to enjoy their present expedition. Seating himself by the fire, he willingly commenced an assault upon the good things before him, and Paoli followed his example. Then, wrapping themselves in their mantles, they endeavoured to get an hour's repose. With nothing to disturb his thoughts, Otho soon fell into a sound slumber. Not so, Paoli, whose mind was too busy with the events to come—too full of deep anxiety concerning his betrothed—to think of sleep. He lay quietly beside his sleeping friend. A profound stillness reigned around, broken only by the breathing of the sleepers, and the low murmur of the gentle ripple as it broke gently on the beach in the outer caverns.

At length, the dull, grey light stole gradually within the caverns: the lights had expired, and, as the daylight increased, the men roused from their slumbers, and started to their feet. Some immediately kindled fires

for cooking ; others went out to bathe in the clear and sparkling water which gently flowed to their feet ; while others took their arms and cleared them from the moisture which had fallen on them during the night.

Paoli now roused his cousin ; and, after a simple breakfast, they each put on a shirt of mail beneath their garments ; and, covering their persons with the common coarse mantles worn by the natives, they summoned Antonio to conduct them to the mansion of the Signor Buttaficcio. Paulini alone accompanied them. Luca Manifesto received from Paoli full instructions how to act in case they should not return by midnight. Then, calling the men together, our hero desired them to follow the directions he had left with Manifesto, and on no account to shew themselves in the outer cavern during the day, for fear some passing fisherman might observe them and give the alarm.

Having cautiously examined, from the mouth

of the cavern, that the coast was clear, and no person within view, our party emerged from the thick coppice which grew around the aperture, and descended the hill. Their guide then struck into a very narrow, by-path, leading through some rich pastures and extensive vineyards. They continued thus across the valley, without meeting any one; though, in the distance, they observed several of the natives coming out to their occupations in the fields. They next ascended a tolerably steep hill—crossed another valley extremely rich in vines, and climbed another and higher hill.

“From the summit of this, Signor,” observed Antonio, “you will have a fine view of the town and fortress, which lie immediately beneath us. I have taken you a great circuit purposely to avoid meeting any of my townsfolk, which might be inconvenient.”

“Yes,” returned Paoli, “if possible you must avoid being recognised for a few days,

when, please God, we will free this beautiful little island from its invaders."

In half an hour they reached the summit of the height, and were enchanted with the extent and beauty of the view disclosed to their gaze. Around them frisked innumerable goats. The appearance of these animals in nearly every part of the island has given it its name. The town of Capraja consisted of many handsome mansions, considering the place and the number of inhabitants. Several of the houses had large gardens, extending up the gentle acclivity whereon the town is built, and which surmounts the beach bounding the waters of the inner harbour. The outlet into the exterior roadstead is extremely narrow, and bounded on each side by high ranges of rugged rocks. Across this entrance, at the period of our tale, a ponderous chain extended to a tower on the opposite side, preventing any attempt to land an enemy; for no where on the rocks of the

outward haven could an assailant land and gain the interior of the island.

To the fortress Paoli first turned his attention. Being erected upon a mount, projecting over the waters of the inner haven, it covered its entire summit, which consisted of a considerable level space. The fortress was a quadrangular edifice of great strength, flanked by low, massive towers. On the broad ramparts Paoli could distinctly see (for it was not more than a mile distant) many persons moving about and armed. The sun's rays flashed, at times, upon mail and steel. The only entrance to the garrison was up an exceedingly narrow path, partly steps cut in the rock, and at the ponderous gateway this path was divided by a deep fissure or ravine in the rocks, above sixty feet deep, and only to be crossed by the draw-bridge being lowered from the fortress.

Paoli scanned its defences with a keen and anxious eye, as well as the distance would permit, and he felt satisfied that his

former conjectures were right ; for the fortress, if well provisioned and defended by resolute soldiers, might defy, for many months, ten times their own number.

“That is a strong place, Giacinto,” said the Count, following the direction of his cousin’s eyes ; “and if we have to attack it openly, will take us time, and cost us many a brave fellow. How the deuce did it happen that the islanders kept such a careless watch and guard as to be surprised by a mere handful of men ? Antonio now confesses that the Genoese were not more than eighty, if so many ; and the town then contained upwards of six hundred men, able and willing to fight.”

“Yes,” returned Paoli, “willing to fight when the fortress was won, and when they were convinced that the invaders were not devils, or men led on by sorcerers. But it was too late then ; for fifty men, once in possession of yonder bridge and gate, could keep it against a thousand for a few days ; and it

seems, by all I have learned, that, in three days, this Achilles Furiani brought from Genoa a force of five hundred men, who were landed under the walls of the fortress. We must now see what we can do by stratagem. If we can once get footing on the other side of the bridge with our fifty men, let this crafty Genoese look to his garrison to save him. I owe him too much not to be anxious to clear scores with him. The gate once ours, there are, Antonio tells me, still a couple of hundred of hearty men ready to fight for the rescue of their Chief. Now let us on ; for, perhaps, your friend of last night may be so heated by his love for this fair niece of the Podesta, as to hurry here before us."

"Except that I am safe, as far as my heart is concerned," said Otho, laughing, "I might think of robbing him of his blue-eyed Annette ; for all the girls of this island, I am told, have blue eyes."

"Well," returned Paoli, "I can answer for

one in it now, not possessing the national colour. Her mother was one of the dark-eyed daughters of Venice."

"By Jove, I long to see this betrothed of yours, Giacinto," interposed Otho. "But here we are at the gate of the Signor Butaficcio's mansion, or rather garden. How are we to get in? By the look of the garden, it is a long way to the house."

"I saw the Signor's niece, at least I think so," observed Antonio, "come into the garden just as we left the hill. I was waiting behind purposely to see if any one came out of the house."

"Knock then," said Paoli. "If we receive no answer, we must even take the liberty of going over the wall."

Pulini, who was very anxious to get in, fearing the passing of anybody, knocked and knocked hard. Presently, a voice from the other side—a female voice cried out, "*Amico, amico*, not so hard. You will either deafen

me, or break our door—two bad things these bad times ; for if you make me deaf, I shall not hear my lover, and, if you break our door, you will let in those horrid Genoese.”

With the last word, the door fell back, and an extremely, pretty and laughing damsel with blue eyes and a profusion of auburn ringlets hanging somewhat negligently, perhaps coquetishly, from beneath a small Tuscan straw hat, appeared.

“Eh ! Who have we here ?” exclaimed she, starting back. But, catching a glimpse of old Antonio, who stood nearest the door, she continued : “The saints preserve us ! Is that you, or your ghost, Antonio ? Where—”

But as her glance fell upon the stately and remarkable figure of Paoli, and her eyes met his, she involuntarily stopped and drew back.

“Pardon our rough intrusion, fair maiden,” said Paoli, stepping within the garden. “No doubt this is an unusual entrance to y do-

mieile. But we must see your good uncle, and at once."

"Ha!" muttered the maiden to herself, "a very nice-spoken man, and the tallest and handsomest I ever saw." Then speaking out, she said, "My uncle is coming up the garden, Signor. She pronounced the last word with a very marked emphasis, and a rapid glance at Paoli's hand. The Signor Buttaficcio, with his other niece, now hurried up, seeing so many strangers in his garden.

Paoli advanced to meet him, while Sampiero, notwithstanding his confession that his heart was already engaged, stopped to converse with the pretty Annette, who seemed vastly puzzled about the strangers who were so grand in their air and manner, and yet so plainly habited—

Paoli whispered a few words in the ear of the Signor Buttaficcio which made him start, while his face flushed with excitement. His nieces were watching with eager curiosity;

but Paoli made a sign to Sampiero, and immediately the whole party hurried into the house, leaving the two girls gazing at each other with astonishment.

"Well," exclaimed Annette to her sister Julia, "here is something, at last, to set our wits to work. Don't let them think to deceive me with their plain attire and rough mantles. Did you observe that stately and majestic man a whole head above the other handsome Signor? Did you remark his hand? He had a most splendid diamond ring on one finger; not a very well assorted article to the habit he had on. Then, did you see the start my uncle made, and how he pulled off his cap, and bowed low, and then looked up at us quite confused? Ah, Julia, here is some secret we must find out."

"But *how*, Annette, *how*?" eagerly questioned Julia.

"Oh dear, how dull you are, Julia," responded Annette. "They are gone into a

private chamber. Thank goodness, all our doors have very large key-holes; so come along. I am dying to know who these Signors are."

And immediately the two maidens hurried into the house.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONFERENCE.

UTTERLY confounded, bewildered, and eager to learn what, to him, appeared to be a stupendous mystery, the ex-podesta conducted the whole party into a commodious chamber, carefully closing the door. Whether the worthy Signor Buttaficcio distrusted his nieces or the old housekeeper (the only domestic he retained) he very carefully adjusted the key in the key-hole so as to fill the orifice. He then repeatedly shook our hero by the hand, asked a hundred questions at once, when, being

very short-necked, and extremely fat, he stopped for breath.

"As to how we got into the island, Signor Buttaficcio," began Paoli, "must be kept for another time. I have several important questions to ask you. First, supposing I succeed in gaining the entrance to the fortress, are the men of the island willing to lend a helping-hand against the invaders?"

"Willing, Signor Paoli!" eagerly replied the ex-podesta, "they are burning to revenge the outrages daily practised against us. But we have no arms: there is not a sword, or a pick, or a dagger, in the whole town!"

"I will remedy that, Signor," responded Paoli. "Now for my next question. Will the procession to the relics in the fortress chapel, be permitted to take place on St John's day?"

"Blessed Virgin!" exclaimed the old man, "how fortunate!" And he rubbed his hands in an ecstasy. "Without a thought, Signor,

of any thing of this kind, I obtained that very permission from the Genoese commander, on the promise of paying a certain sum he has demanded, and which I am to take him this very day."

"That is fortunate indeed," exclaimed Paoli; "for on that procession I build my hopes of surprising the guard at the bridge and gate."

"I see it all now," interrupted the ex-podesta in a state of high excitement. "If we had but the weapons, and a few trained men-at-arms to—"

"Be easy on that score," interposed Paoli. "We have both. When did you see the Marchese Damari and his daughter? I trust they are well."

"Well in health, Signor Paoli, but wretched in mind. This *maladetta* Campaldino threatens to force the Lady Agnes to the altar the day after St John's."

"Ha! muttered Paoli. "The day AFTER?"

Campaldino will find we have an account to settle *before* that. Now, Signor Buttaficcio, a very important question yet remains, and then I will let you clearly into my plans for St John's day. Suppose I contrive to get fifty men here to-morrow night with arms for a hundred more, where are they to remain till the time for action? It will be but for a few hours. Still—"

"That is easily provided for," interrupted the ex-podesta. "I have a long range of warehouses adjoining this house where we salt our stock of fish, and where they will be perfectly safe from either being seen or heard."

"You said, Signor Buttaficcio, that this was the day you are permitted to visit the Marchese and his daughter." Then taking from his finger the splendid ring, remarked by the ex-podesta's niece, and which was a gift from Agnes, he handed it to the Caprese, saying—"Present that ring to the Lady Agnes; and,

if you can, whisper to her that the owner is near; and, with God's blessing, will be within the walls that hold her prisoner before the sun of St. John's eve sets. Should you not be allowed to see the Lady Agnes without witnesses, contrive, nevertheless, to let her see that ring, the motto of which is, *ESPERANZA*. She will understand it well."

"I may not see them alone, Signor," said the Caprese; "but, depend on it, I will contrive she shall see the ring, and in a manner that the Lady Agnes may not betray herself or me, by sudden emotion, or confusion of manner."

Paoli then clearly explained how he intended proceeding on St. John's day. The podesta was in ecstasy: he was a most inveterate hater of the Genoese, and an ardent lover of liberty. Besides, he owed them a grudge for depriving him of his title of podesta, of which he was exceedingly proud.

Having acquainted the Caprese with their

rencounter with Achilles Furiani, and put him upon his guard, Paoli thought it best to return at once to the caverns. The ex-podesta wished them to remain till night, for fear of attracting observation ; but all the party were of opinion they incurred less risk in returning the way they came ; for the entrance to the caves was in so remote and obscure a spot, and so hidden by projecting rocks and thick underwood, that no danger of being seen would occur ; and, perhaps, during the absence of Signor Buttaficcio at the fortress, some visitor, or unforeseen event might create observation.

Accordingly, after partaking of some refreshment, and drinking a flask of wine to the success of their expedition, Paoli and his friend and attendants departed for the caverns.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GOVERNOR AND THE EX-PODESTA.

"Now, dear uncle," said Annette, to the ex-podesta, as she assisted the old gentleman to fill two tolerably large bags with various coins, the amount of the sum levied by Campaldino—"now do tell me—for I am dying to know—who is that magnificent stranger, and the very handsome man with him? I must know, that's positive."

"Why, child, I tell you they are merchants

from Piombino, come to buy up the stock-fish and salt cod on speculation."

The two girls burst into a hearty giggle. Annette laughed till the tears ran from her eyes.

"Merchants of stock-fish, indeed!" ejaculated she, patting the old man on the cheek; "oh, my dear, good uncle, you may deceive those abominable Genoese, but you can't blind your two little nieces. Do merchants of stock-fish wear diamond rings, worth I can't say how much? Do merchants of stock-fish make presents of diamond rings? for I see the same ring, uncle, on your finger, though you are doing your best to hide it. And do fish-merchants carry swords under their mantles in a place where swords are forbidden? And, as sure as I live, I saw, as he went in at the door, and the nail caught his vest—"

"Well, you little inquisitive vixen," said the uncle, smiling, and tying up his sacks, "what did you see?"

"I saw a beautiful cuirass of chain-mail, like that of the Crusader in the fortress, on the breast of the tall Signor. So confess at once—out with it all—" and the maiden shook her finger playfully, "or I will tell that huge giant of a Genoese, Achilles Furiani."

"I will lock you up in your room this instant if—But no," added the ex-podesta, "I may as well make a clean breast of it; for they must know it to-morrow; and, after all, the dear children would willingly risk their lives to serve the Lady Agnes."

So the old gentleman sat down, and made his two nieces acquainted with all.

Annette clasped her hands—blushed—then grew pale; and finally sprang upon her feet, and kissed her sister Julia several times, saying—

"Oh, how delightful! We shall get rid of those horrid Genoese. My beloved Lady Agnes will be free, and then she will marry

that glorious Signor Paoli. We shall have a splendid wedding-fête. The whole island shall be a blaze of bonfires—and I—”

“There, for the love of the Saints stop,” interposed her uncle. “Get me my hat. I have plenty for you to do besides talking. All the stock-fish, &c., must be taken into the small store, and you must do it yourselves. At this moment, there is, luckily, not much. Then you two and old Bridgetta must bake cakes without end, and roast those two kids, and prepare all the provisions the house contains. Let no one either see or hear you. Keep out all visitors till my return. And now, I am off.”

On entering the fortress, the Signor Buttaficcio was admitted into the presence of the Governor, who turned his keen eye upon the worthy and somewhat excited Caprese. A satisfied expression stole over Campaldino's features, as he perceived his visitor lay upon the table two heavy bags.

"I see you are punctual, my worthy, friend," said the Governor, desiring the ex-podesta to take a seat. "The tribute-money, I suppose."

"Yes, your Eccellenza. I have contrived to make it up; though the saints are witness it has cost me much to wring even the half out of my poor countrymen.

"The old story, always the same song," returned Campaldino, laughing. "I dare say now, if I absolutely wanted as much more—don't be alarmed, for I may not want it."

"Where is it to come from?" interrogated the ex-podesta, feigning to be dreadfully alarmed. "We have no gold mines, or even iron ones here, your Eccellenza."

"Look you, my good friend," interrupted the Genoese, "the fitting-out of the expedition to take this little beggarly island—don't be offended, Signor; I see you don't like the name, it's not pleasant; therefore, you see I do all I can to convince myself that I am wrong

to think so. But, as I was saying, the costs of the expedition have not been defrayed by—what shall I say?—by the plunder. Therefore I am now thinking of selling my rights in the conquest to the Government, who will, of course, send a new Governor and a much larger force. The new Governor will expect a handsome—a very handsome present. Now I feel for you; as I am actually getting fond of——”

“I see,” resumed Campaldino, “that word sticks in your throat, my good friend. But I have a way of getting you out of this dilemma. You have heard that I have offered myself to the Marchese’s daughter, and have been refused. The maiden pleads a former attachment. That’s all very well; but, under the existing state of things, she must make up her mind to a different determination. I gave the lady till St. John’s day to consider of my proposals. If then she is unwilling, I must (though I greatly regret it) use the power in my hands, and force

her to unite her destiny to mine. Now, this morning I have received intelligence from Genoa, that forces me to alter those resolutions. She must, therefore, now at once give me her solemn promise to go willingly to the altar immediately after the ceremony of St. John's day. She, as my wife, and her father, will sail with me; for I intend quitting the island that very night. The next day, the new Governor will arrive. Why, Signor Buttaficcio, you look alarmed. But there is no need. An ancient feud continues between me and the new Governor. I shall sail; but my lieutenant, Furiani, will retain the command of the fortress till the arrival of my successor. Go now, and see the maiden, for she refuses to see me. If she gives me her sacred word to go willingly to the altar on St. John's day, I will wait till then, If she still persists in an obstinate refusal, by ——" And the Genoese raised his voice, and his own eye flashed—" by the bones of St. John, and all the

sacred relics contained in your chapel, she shall stand this blessed day at the altar and never quit the spot till the priest makes her mine. Now do you understand me, Signor Buttaficcio?"

The spirit of the old Caprese was nearly betraying him at this audacious menace from a miserable adventurer to a daughter of the ancient and noble race of Damari. But, curbing his feelings, he bowed humbly, saying, "You know, your Eccellenza, I can but use persuasion. She is our lord's daughter; and I can only humbly entreat her to do that willingly which she has no power to resist."

"That is all, I require of you, Signor Buttaficcio," returned Campaldino. "She has refused to admit me to her presence. I do not wish to use force, if I can obtain my end quietly. But my purpose I *will* gain, be it as it may; for alive, she shall never quit this fortress, except as the bride of Andrea Campaldino. I shall await your return here. You

know the way to the Marchese's apartments."

With a very heavy heart, the Caprese, bowing, left the chamber. As he did so, who should he meet in the corridor but the lieutenant, Achilles Furiani?

"Ha, Signor Buttaficcio," exclaimed that worthy, "is this you? Delighted to see you looking so well." And, holding out his huge hand, he gave the unfortunate Podesta that was a shake which turned his already-red face to a purple hue. "How is your charming niece, Annette?" continued he. "My heart is parched to a cinder. She consumes me. But stay; don't be in a hurry. Who is that good-looking fellow that resides with you? I am told he is an artist. Droll place this—now I think of it, eh—for an artist."

"Nothing droll, worthy Signor Furiani, in a nephew coming from Rome, where he is studying, to see his old uncle. But, Signor Achilles, I am bearing a most important message from

your commander to the Marchese; so excuse me."

"Oh! nephew, eh? may be," muttered the Genoese. "By all the saints, I must have that girl for a wife; and get out of this cramped island, where, by Jove, there is no room for a man to stretch his limbs."

Leaving Furiani to seek his commander, the Signor Buttaficcio proceeded to the apartments assigned to the Marchese.

The ex-podesta found the Marchese Damari alone reclining dejectedly in a large chair, and gazing out through the open lattice upon the broad expanse of water surrounding his native island.

"Ah, my worthy friend, is it you?" said the Marchese, extending his hand, with a very sad smile. "This boon of seeing our old and valued friend, deserves the warm thanks of my heart. For, amid the deep affliction into which we are plunged, I was eagerly wishing

for your arrival. I have one chance more to save my child from death ; for her death it will be if dragged to the altar by that detestable adventurer."

"Be of good cheer, my lord," responded the Caprese, pressing affectionately the hand held out to him. Then, bending down his head, he whispered, "Your deliverance is nearer at hand, thank Heaven, than you imagine."

"Ha ! What mean you, my worthy friend? Do not raise hopes the more cruel when crushed."

At that moment, the Lady Agnes, hearing the raised voice of her father, and his somewhat excited tone, entered the room.

"Ah, my dear young lady," exclaimed the ex-podesta, taking the hand held out to him, "you have been weeping. But I trust the tidings I bring will chase away the tears, and restore the roses to your cheek."

Letting go the hand of the young lady, he went to the door, looked carefully without, closed it, and then, taking Paoli's ring from his vest, he held it forth to the maiden. With clasped hands, and, at the first sight, pale as monumental marble, stood Agnes, gazing upon the ring. Then, once more, the bright blood flew over face and temples, and the words, "Paoli! *Esperanza!*" burst from her lips. Wild with delight, she threw herself upon the neck of her astonished father, saying, "Father, beloved father, my heart tells me we are saved; for Paoli, my beloved, is here. This is his token." She took the ring from the delighted Caprese. "From none other than himself, did our kind friend here receive it. Is it not so, Signor Buttaficcio?"

"Happy am I, dear lady, to say such is the fact. But listen to me, for time runs on; and I have to state startling things. We must bring ourselves to use deceit or at least dissemble with our tyrant."

The Signor Buttaficcio then distinctly stated, all the plans of Paoli; and subsequently delivered the message of Campaldino.

At first, the maiden grew pale and trembled, while the proud blood of the Crusader, for a moment, was roused in the patient and gentle nature of the Marchese.

"What!" he exclaimed, "my child—the last of the Damaris—give her sacred promise to stand at the altar with this Genoese bloodhound? Let us perish in each other's arms first; for the word of a Damari even to such as he, once passed, must be fulfilled; and should our deliverer, by some unforeseen accident, fail on that day, my child—"

"Nay, beloved father, I have no fear, none," responded Agnes. "I will accede to this man's terms. Heaven is on our side. At all events, it is a case that has no remedy; for this bad man would assuredly drag me to the altar this night."

"I do not deny, my beloved child," said the Marchese, "but that you are right. Misfortune has somewhat broken my temper. We will, therefore, act as you say; and if it is the will of God, that Paoli should, for a time, fail in taking this fortress, I have a remedy which I think may even then avert your fate. Campaldino's idol is gold. Surely the great wealth I possess in Florence and Pisa—if I offer him the whole—will induce him to resign his designs upon you—"

"Nay, father," replied Agnes, "not so. Campaldino seeks revenge, a greater passion than even that of gold."

The Marchese sighed; and, after some further remarks, the Signor Buttaficcio left them. Agnes full of hope—her father, with feelings dulled from age, resigned, but fearful of the future.

While the ex-podesta was communicating with the father and daughter, Achilles Furiani

entered the chamber where the governor awaited the return of the Signor Buttaficcio.

"I come to hear the news, governor," said Furiani, seating himself carelessly opposite his commander and looking extremely well pleased at his enormous limbs as he threw one over the other. "I have also to give you a bit of information."

"Well, out with your information whatever it is," replied the governor; "for I rather suspect we have had quite enough of our conquest."

"Ha, by St. Jacomo, you are right," returned Achilles. "This place is too confined for men of our genius. I am, moreover, of opinion if we do not get out of it quietly, we shall have to depart rather hastily, if not be carried out on a stretcher."

"*Cento diavoli!*" said Campaldino; "what makes you think that, Achilles? No one has

heard the intelligence I received this morning."

"Well, you shall hear. I was up very early, or rather went to bed very early this morning; and it being a glorious sun-rise, and feeling rather heated, I went to take a little fresh air from the top of the tower; when just standing out from under the land, I beheld a very fine zebec at some distance off. I also observed a large galley. A fine tramontana was blowing; and, in a few minutes, I saw the zebec run along side the galley, which was crowded with armed men. I thought, at first, it might be the galley with the troops you sent for to Genoa. But, as she came nearer, I saw at once she was not a Genoese craft by her build. The zebec remained near her for a few minutes, when both tacked and stood away; one to the southward, the other to the westward, reducing their canvas, though the wind was light enough to carry every stitch they

could set. I was too sleepy to think much about it then ; but now I have had my nap, on turning the matter over, it's cursedly suspicious—"

"It's nothing more than I expected," said Campaldino, very coolly ; "only they are very expeditious." Furiani fixed his large, dark eye on the one orb of his commander, and then whistled. "Now, resumed Campaldino, "I will tell you, not only my news, but how we must act. I have received intelligence this morning, by those Elba fishermen, whom I employed as spies, at Bastia, that not only has my enemy, Paoli, returned, but that a galley with six hundred men was to be shortly fitted out for an expedition against this fortress. You are aware that I sent to Genoa for a stronger garrison ; for should Corsica recover her liberty, we might depend upon being attacked. But this very morning our craft returned, bringing me letters. There is nothing but mourning and dismay in Genoa. Their

fleet has been scattered and destroyed by the Venetians—the French have declared war against the Republic, and they are expecting a French fleet. Moreover, the Lord of Milan has laid claim to some disputed territory ; and, as a climax to our misfortunes, a popular tumult amongst the silk-spinners, backed by the powerful family of the Spinola, has led to a change of Doge. I am desired to evacuate this island, and return with the men garrisoning the fortress, to Spezia, and join my force to that of the Count Brignioletti, who is besieging Sarzana, the worthy Count of that name having declared that his towns-people, and territory owe no obedience to the Republic.”

“ *Corpo di Bacco !* ” exclaimed Achilles, rubbing his huge head as usual, “ you bother me, when you come to politics. I know nothing whatever of any of the parties you have been jumbling together this last half hour ; nor do I desire to understand anything about

them. I want simply to know when you marry this Marchese's daughter. What's to be done next? for I intend following so good an example; and if pretty Annette will not have me for a husband, she must even follow my fortunes without that clog round her neck."

Campaldino stared at his lieutenant; and, then, shrugging his shoulders, said—

"Listen! To-morrow this ceremony to the relics will take place. As soon as the procession enters the fortress, we shall up with the bridge and keep them prisoners, till we are ready to leave. March your twenty men here to-night, as soon as dark. After my marriage—for I will marry this girl—or my revenge is lost—I shall embark the men under the command of Gavotti, with orders to proceed to Genoa, while you and I, and our wives will sail in the galley for Pisa; and, sharing the fortune of my bride between us, live quietly any where on the continent of Italy. I am sick of this wild,

roving and uncertain life which we have led for so many years."

"Give me your hand, Andrea. Your plan is a splendid one. *Corpo di Juda!* What a pleasant life we shall lead, taking care of our wives, nursing our young ones, and exchanging our swords for ploughshares."

Campaldino burst into a fit of laughter.

"What a nurse you will make, Achilles! But a truce to joking. We must look out sharp. If that galley should be a Corsican one, full of men, and enter our harbour to-morrow, adieu to our projects of escaping to Italy. My revenge against Paoli, I shall have, at all events. In such case, we must make our escape from the island through the caverns, I trust the two boats are safe."

"No fear of them," said Achilles, "for they are hauled high up into an inner cavern, and almost impossible to be hurt by any thing except an earthquake."

CHAPTER XIII.

NARRATIVE OF OTHO SAMPIERO.

PAOLI and his party reached the caverns without observation, and found their men quietly enjoying their mid-day repast beside the fires. Luca Manifesto and his nephew, while exploring the caverns, discovered the two boats, each capable of containing nearly thirty men, drawn high up in a cave, on the other side of the rock ; and covered over carefully with tarred canvas. There were oars, masts sails, etc.

"I have no doubt," said Paoli, "they keep these boats, in case of extremity, as a means of escape. As we know not what might occur, the best way will be to knock out a plank in each."

This was accordingly done.

"By-the-by, Otho," said our hero, to his cousin, as they reclined on their mantles before the fire after, having finally arranged all matters, relative to their expedition, "the evening is long. We shall not move till after midnight, so as to give the men a few hours' sleep. I have not yet heard your adventures after our parting. Your not joining me in Venice caused me much uneasiness and anxiety. Let me know how you passed your time till we were again united before the walls of La Rocca."

"I will do so, cousin mine, willingly, though one part of my narrative will recal a melancholy event, and some bitter recollections of one who merited a far different fate.

“After the death of Mastino Campaldino, you know we agreed to separate ; and, as nothing further could be done in the cause of our suffering country, to escape to the continent. I first proceeded to La Rocca, and just contrived to secure some jewels, money, and plate before a strong party, under a Genoese captain took possession of the place. Disguised as peasants, young Gaffieri and I, with six others, made our way, with difficulty, to Orto ; and, in the darkness of a tempestuous night, got on board a large fishing-boat moored to the quay ; and, cutting her from her fastenings, we drifted, with the gale, from the land out to sea. Rejoicing at our escape, (for we had been hotly pursued from La Rocca,) we paid little attention to the gale, as the wind being off shore, the water remained tolerably smooth for three or four miles. But, as we rapidly increased our distance, the sea became uncommonly rough ; and, to steady the boat, we were forced to hoist a small portion of sail.

I was the only one of the party that had any knowledge of nautical matters ; and all I knew was how to steer, and, if necessary, pull an oar.

“ We drove before the gale for about three leagues in tolerable comfort ; but it increased tremendously. The night was dark enough ; but as the gale increased in fury, a dense fog came with it. I was perfectly aware that, with the wind as it then blew, provided we could keep the boat free, we should make the Italian coast easily the next day. The fog was so dense that we could not see the length of ourselves ahead, and the boat was nearly full, notwithstanding our strenuous efforts to keep her free of the seas that broke over her ; when one of the men in the bow called out in a voice of terror, ‘ a vessel coming right down on us ! ’ The fact was we were driving right into her, as she was crossing our course. The next instant we struck with tremendous force.

“ Our boat was dashed to pieces ; but, sin-

gular enough, excepting one poor fellow, we all contrived to lay hold of something, and scramble on board the strange bark, and, but for some bruises and blows, we were safe and sound, returning thanks to Providence for our most unlooked-for preservation.

“The crew of the caravel were, at first, more frightened than ourselves, and fled below, thinking they were boarded by *ladri-di-mare*, by which cowardice we were all nearly swamped, for the bark was deeply laden, and her helm neglected. She ran up in the wind, and then her close-reefed sail blew out into strings, and she shipped a sea that caused her to tremble from stem to stern, and to leave us in doubt whether she was not inclined to follow our unfortunate boat. We soon, however, reassured the startled padrone and his crew ; and, after some little exertion, the vessel was got to rights, and another sail hoisted. The caravel was a Livornese, bound to Cagliari, in Sardinia, which she was not just then destined

to make; for, so violent became the storm, that, during the night, she was forced to run before it. At last she was driven to take shelter in the mouth of the Tiber, and cast anchor at Ostia.

“However unfortunate this was to the interests of the padrone, it was the very thing that suited Gaffieri and myself, as we both wished to proceed to Rome. We sincerely trusted that you had succeeded in making the Italian coast. Having landed at Ostia, we proceeded at once to Rome. Gaffieri’s sister had married, some years before, a Corsican Signor, who, previously to the breaking out of the war, had sold his possessions, and settled in Rome, where many of our exiled countrymen resided.

“I proceeded at once to my uncle Alberic, Count d’Orsini, who received me with parental kindness, and took up my abode at his Palace till I had made up my mind what to do. I found that my uncle’s family were engaged in

a furious contest of rivalry with the proud and powerful house of the Colonna. Rome had returned to its old state of anarchy and confusion, after the banishment of that mad enthusiast, Cola Rienzi, when suddenly, to the astonishment of all, Rienzi re-entered Rome, actually appointed by Innocent the Sixth to govern the city, under the title of Senator. The fickle Romans welcomed his return with boisterous joy, forgetting, in their love of change, that but a short time had elapsed since they drove him from their city, with imprecations on his head. But it is ever thus with the people. Nevertheless, his popularity, in a very short time, began to decline. Misfortune had, by no means, improved the disposition of the Tribune. His former enthusiasm was exchanged for suspicion and cruelty. But I leave Rienzi and his motives to our historians. I have little to say of *him*, but of one connected with him by ties of blood.

On his return to Rome, Rienzi was accom-

panied by his niece, who was famed throughout Italy for her extraordinary beauty, her wonderful eloquence, her marvellous talent as an improvisatrice, and her enthusiastic love of freedom. Her addresses to the people of every town through which Rienzi passed in his wanderings, were the wonder and delight of all ; and, in more than one city, her eloquence induced the people to rise and throw off their yoke of slavery. So powerful, was said to be the effect of her language upon the lower classes, that many of the Princes of the small Italian States closed their gates against her entrance.

“Berenice Rienzi—such was the name of the beautiful, but unfortunate, improvisatrice—accompanied, as I said, her uncle to Rome, and took up her residence in a noble mansion, where, in a very short time, she attracted, by her splendid assemblies, her brilliant wit, and superb beauty, all that was noble and wealthy

in Rome. Many of the young nobility became desperately enamoured of her beauty ; but the most conspicuous from his birth, talents, and power, was Ercole Colonna, accounted the haughtiest and proudest of all the Roman nobility, and the determined rival of Alberic Orsini.

“ One evening, I accompanied Orsini’s nephew, a young man of my own age, to one of those splendid *fêtes* given by Berenice Rienzi. The saloons were crowded with all the nobility, male and female, in Rome. A man must, in truth, have had a most insensible heart, to move amid that scene of luxury and beauty, and remain unmoved. The splendid decorations of the apartments—the chaste and graceful taste with which everything was arranged—attracted, without dazzling, the eye. But when once the gaze rested on Berenice, the beauty of everything, animate and inanimate, faded.

“The improvisatrice was sitting on a raised platform surrounded, as usual, by her train of admirers and lovers. She held a lute in her hand, though, at that time, she used it not. She was in one of her inspired moods. I could see, by the flash of her dark eyes, the rapid changes of colour that went and came upon the full and beautiful cheek, and the graceful motion of one hand, that she was speaking; though, as I stood at a little distance, the words did not reach my ear. But when I did hear her voice (for I contrived to get much nearer through the dense crowd) every word went to the heart. When she ceased, a murmur of delight and enthusiastic admiration burst from the throng around her. She then rose, and walked through the saloons, leaning on the arm of the haughty Colonna.

“If every feature of Berenice’s face was perfection, the beauty and grandeur of her form was unequalled. She was above the

usual standard of her sex : every movement of her full and rounded figure excited admiration from the unstudied grace that accompanied it. After being introduced to this siren, I became, like the rest of her followers, perfectly fascinated. I bowed at the shrine ; and, whether my youthful vanity blinded me or not, I fancied that, except when Ercole Colonna was present, Berenice bestowed most of her attention upon me.

“ A superb *fête* was given by Berenice. The company were to descend the Tiber, towards Ostia, in splendidly decorated galleys, or rather barges, to examine the ruins of temples and other buildings, lying on its banks—remnants of the gigantic puissance of the ancient Romans. The barges were to be drawn back by oxen. Though the party was a select one, the haughty Colonna, from some caprice, declined to join it. There was, however, one cavalero for each dame. It was a bright and glorious morning. The heat of the autumnal

sun was tempered by a gentle west wind, and bright masses of grey, fleecy clouds sailed slowly across the sun, and threw many fanciful shadows over the scenery, and on the muddy waters of the rapidly-gliding Tiber. The party occupied a raised platform in the stern of the galley, protected by a slight railing, decorated with flowers. We had a select band of musicians in the prow; and, as we glided past the city, and gained the open campagna, the band broke the stillness by their enlivening strains. We were carried along solely by the waters of this turbulent and somewhat dangerous, stream. After passing the famous temple of Vesta, the river bends away to the northward, with increased rapidity. We had skilful pilots, and heedless of the risk of the voyage, listened to the inspired eloquence of our goddess of the *fête*, as she descanted upon the glories of ancient Rome, and of that idol of the human race, Liberty.

“The oxen, decorated with garlands, were

yoked to the barge in order to return. As we slowly ascended, I was in earnest conversation with Berenice. The subject of our talk was Corsica, the love of her people for freedom, and their hatred of a foreign yoke. Berenice was better acquainted with our annals even than myself. She traced our history back to the earlier times, when Cadmus, the son of Agenor, wandering in quest of Europa, came to our island, which was then named Calista. He left there many of his countrymen with his own cousin Membleareus. 'Eight generations after this,' Berenice continued, quite enthusiastic in her theme, 'Theros brought a colony to Corsica from Lacedemon.

"This Theros, who was originally of the race of Cadmus, carried with him to Corsica the Monegae, a wandering tribe, and formed there a new colony. From him the island was called Thera.

"The Mingae, though a wandering tribe, were of illustrious descent, being the posterity of the

Argonauts.' Thus did Berenice account for the first peopling of Corsica ; but the way that Isidorus accounts for the name of Corsica, is most amusing. He declares that a Ligurian woman of the name of Corsa having often observed a bull swim over to the island,* had the curiosity to follow him in a small vessel, and so discovered where he went. Relating, on her return, this marvellous swim of her bull, the Ligurians sent there a colony, and called the island Corsica. Its next masters, she said, were the Carthaginians. From them, the island passed under the dominion of Rome. Lucius Cornelius Scipio conquered Corsica about the period of the first Punic war, and forced the natives to pay a tribute of one hundred thousand pounds of wax yearly.

"Berenice had just brought our history down to the period, from whence we ourselves take it up, and was descanting on the cruelties

* A tolerable swim—that of nearly a hundred miles.

practised upon us by nearly all our conquerors, when a sudden and violent shock was felt on board the barge. A wild shriek followed. The tow-rope had snapped, and the barge, coming broadside to, a violent rush of the current round a point caused her to heel suddenly on her side. Berenice, another Signora, and Signor Guilia (a learned antiquarian) were thrown against the rail, which broke, and, in an instant, the three were plunged into the river. Being a good swimmer, I threw off my vest and sword, plunged in, and instantly caught the sinking Berenice in my grasp. She was perfectly sensible and tractable; and I swam down the stream till I had an opportunity of landing, with my precious burden, on a low point. As soon as she recovered breath, I assisted her a little way up the bank; where, being exhausted, she reposed herself till the barge, which had been driven on the bank by the current, could make its way to us. Berenice expressed the deepest anxiety concerning the fate of the young Countess de

Manfridi and the Signor Guilia. I proceeded along the bank some way, hoping, if the unfortunates had been carried down by the stream, I might yet afford assistance. But no trace was to be seen of them; and the barge was rowed to the spot where Berenice sat.

“When I returned a sad gloom hung over the before gay party; so like everything else in human life—rising in smiles, setting in tears. The countess was providentially saved by one of the cavaleros, but the ill-fated antiquarian perished; nor was his body ever recovered—washed, I suppose, into the Mediterranean. It was a mournful return to the eternal city. After seeing the Lady Berenice to her Palace, in a covered litter, I returned, immersed in somewhat melancholy reflections, to the Orsini mansion.

“If Rienzi’s niece was dangerous to me before, you will allow that my situation was now ten-fold more trying. I had saved her life; had rescued her from an ignoble death;

and yet, though fascinated, dazzled, bewildered—strange waywardness of the human heart—I was not prepared to cast myself and fortunes at the feet of the improvisatrice. We met. I know not why I should be so forgetful; but I remember neither what I said, or what she replied. On a sudden, the door of the saloon was thrown open. I was at the feet of Berenice, and held her hand. At the door stood Ercole Colonna! He spoke not a word, but stood like a statue, with his face pale as marble, and his lips quivering with intense passion. Berenice, uttering a faint exclamation, became even paler than the Colonna. She rose, and pressing her hand to her lofty brow, hurried from the saloon through another door without uttering a word. Colonna, with a laugh that startled me, turned on his heel and retired.

“I stood confused and perplexed. I knew not what to infer from the conduct, either of Berenice or Colonna. ‘What tie exists between them?’ I asked myself, as I slowly and

thoughtfully left the Palace. The streets were thronged with an excited populace; but I heeded neither their cries or tumult, but pushed my way through the multitude, scarcely caring which way I went, so as I cleared myself from the presence of my fellow-men. Reaching the Colosseum, I plunged amid its solitude to be alone with thought. The cool air that rushed through the vaulted passages by degrees calmed the fever of my blood; and as I crossed what was once the arena of many a bloody spectacle, I beheld the Count Colonna advancing towards me. I did not turn away, and the next instant we stood face to face. The Count was still deadly pale, but there remained no visible trace of passion upon his severe, but extremely handsome features.

“‘I have followed you here, Count Sampiero,’ said the Colonna, speaking calmly and emphatically, ‘and may I inquire, Count,’ I said, with equal coolness, ‘for what purpose you have been pleased to dog my footsteps?’

‘Simply,’ returned the Roman, ‘to make this proposition: either that you quit this city, or take your chance of sleeping beneath the marbles of San Pietro,’ ‘You are generous, Count,’ I replied, with a somewhat bitter smile. ‘Quit this city at any man’s bidding, I will not; neither do I relish, at this moment, sleeping, as you term it, beneath even the superb marbles of your glorious San Pietro.’ ‘You are somewhat dull, Count, in taking my meaning,’ retorted the Roman; ‘but I will speak more plainly. The Colonna brooks no rival in the affections of Rienzi’s niece. Two cannot possess her, and, while I live and wear a sword, none shall dispute my claim.’ ‘If the lady has given you a claim, Sir Count, I have neither the right nor the wish to dispute her will or choice.’ ‘All this is idle, Sir Corsican,’ returned Colonna, losing temper, and speaking in a scornful tone. ‘Draw!’ And he himself drew his sword. ‘One or other of us two must be carried from this spot.’ ‘I

owe you no enmity, Count Colonna ; and I regret that you force this foolish contest on me ; but I do not wish to trouble any one with the burden of my body, and will, therefore, keep life in it as long as possible.'

"Whether because he saw me undisturbed by passion, or some inward feeling urged him on, I cannot say ; but Colonna fought with an impetuosity that deprived him of his usual skill ; for, though I determined only to remain on my guard, and, if possible, disarm him, yet his strength and skill so baffled me, that, heated myself, for I was hard pressed, I attacked in turn, and, in the end, though I bitterly regretted it, I stretched him, severely wounded, at my feet. Sheathing my unlucky weapon, I bent down, and, raising his head, strove to stanch the blood. Just then, I heard quick steps behind me, and, raising my head, perceived four or five of the domestics of the Colonna family, hurrying to raise their lord. With scowling looks and threats of vengeance,

they raised the insensible Colonna, and, covering him with his mantle, they bore him from the Colosseum.

“In a frame of mind, by no means to be envied, I left the place, and, soon after, became mingled in a dense crowd of the very lower orders of Rome. Shouts of ‘Down with Rienzi! Death to the Tribune!’ and many other popular cries, resounded on all sides. Bands of retainers, armed to the teeth, and having the badge of their various houses, joined the mob; and, presently, to my horror, I beheld Rienzi, himself, in the hands of a furious multitude, who were dragging him to execution. I thought of Berenice who idolized her uncle. She had often declared she would never survive him if he fell in the cause of Liberty.

“I struggled with the crowd to get close to the once venerated champion of Roman liberty, when the mob suddenly paused before a noble palace, for a female voice, even in that fierce tumult, arrested them. I looked up, and saw

Berenice Rienzi standing on the balcony, as with outstretched arms and excited features, she harangued the mob. The wonderful flow of impassioned words which fell from her inspired tongue, had its usual effect; even the ruffians that held Rienzi fell back and hesitated. Profiting by their apparent indecision, Rienzi himself hastened to pour upon them his usual eloquence. There is scarcely a doubt that he would again have gained their hearts, when a gigantic ruffian, with his arms bare to the shoulder, pushed through those surrounding him, and, with a knife, stabbed the Tribune to the heart. The next moment, my sword was passed through the body of the wretch. A wild and piercing shriek rent the air. I was rushing forward, for Berenice frantically threw herself from the balcony, when I received from behind, a tremendous blow of a mallet, which stretched me senseless on the ground.

“When consciousness returned, I perceived

I was lying upon my own couch in the Orsini Palace. It was many days before I could ask the questions I longed, yet feared, to ask. A party of the Orsini retainers had seen me in the crowd, and rescued me, when a huge smith had felled me with his hammer. Alas! the rest of the intelligence chilled my heart for many a day. The gifted, the noble Berenice was no more! Though caught by the people, in her fall from the balcony, she afterwards broke a blood-vessel in her agony of grief; and, in less than twenty-four hours, uncle and niece were laid low."

The Count Sampiero here paused for a few minutes, pained, no doubt by the recollections of that period. Giacinto, after giving some directions to Pulini, roused his cousin, who resumed his narrative, which we shall continue in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

SAMPIERO'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

"ROME," continued the Count Sampiero, "after this incident became hateful to me. Ercole Colonna was recovering from the wound he had received ; but I fear his heart suffered a greater in the death of the ill-fated improvisatrice.

"Gaffieri was gone to Naples, and I resolved, now that I was so sadly awakened from the dream that had bound my senses, to proceed to Venice, and make inquiries after you. A

tedious and dangerous journey I had of it. I got no further than Pisa, when I gained intelligence that completely changed my intentions. I heard from a countryman of ours, who had been in Venice, that the Venetian fleet had sailed for the eastern seas, and that you had the command of a galley in the expedition. There were also in Pisa several Corsicans, who had recently fled the island, as the persecutions and exactions of the invaders had increased ten-fold.

“To my astonishment, I learned that that traitor (not that I was aware he was so then), Antonetti, who, you know, was next heir to my estates, in default of issue, had sworn allegiance to the Genoese Government, and handed over a third of my possessions to the Genoese Governors as the fine. He then quietly sat down in my paternal Castle of La Rocca, to enjoy at his ease my forfeited property. At the period of my escape from Corsica, Tomaso, the son of my old huntsman, Domenichino,

accompanied me as my attendant, and a faithful, devoted follower he proved. As soon as he heard this intelligence, he said that he and his father always suspected that Antonetti was playing a double part; for that, during his absence with me in the mountains, the Signor Antonetti had visited La Rocca and Castle Ranuncio, and endeavoured, by bribery and other means, to discover where the family treasure was buried. Tomaso strongly advised our returning to Corsica in the disguise of sailors, that we might look after Antonetti, and, if necessary, remove the hidden property.

"I, myself, felt a wish to return. I had lost all chance of joining you by my long stay in Rome; and it required very little persuasion to induce me to adopt Tomaso's plans. Being neither tall nor short, nor very remarkable in any way, I incurred very little risk. Disguised as a Pisan sailor, and having found the padrone of a small bark, bound for

Porto Vecchio, I took passage with him. I so far trusted him as to let him know we were Corsican exiles, anxious to return and live quietly under the Genoese government. Indeed I might, had it been necessary, have told him who I was, and that a price was set upon my head. There was no fear of him. The Pisans detest the Genoese who have destroyed their commerce.

“We reached Porto Vecchio after a short run ; and, landing, without attracting any observation, we took the road across the country, towards Monte Bavello. Avoiding the places garrisoned by Genoese, we reached, the third evening, a peasant’s hut on the borders of my own domain of La Rocca. The owner of the hut, who very cordially gave us the usual welcome, was a stranger to me, though not to Tomaso, who, however, kept his features much concealed. The man, a fine, hardy, resolute looking fellow, placed the best fare he possessed before us ; and, while eating, I asked a

few questions about the state of the country. At first the peasant answered rather surlily ; but, changing my tone, I spoke to him in the *patois* peculiar to our part of the island. He started, looked at me for a moment, and then answered with greater civility and less reserve.

“ ‘ You are a Corsican Signor,’ said he. ‘ How came you and your companion so far from the coast, and in the garb of foreign sailors ?’ ”

“ I replied—

“ ‘ We were glad to get employment under a Pisan padrone. We came thus far inland to inquire after relatives.’ ”

“ ‘ You had little luck to come back here,’ replied the peasant. ‘ ’Tis only now that the cursed tyranny of our oppressors is really felt. We are ground to the earth.’ ”

“ ‘ And is all the spirit of our countrymen gone ?’ I replied. ‘ Is there not a spark left to kindle a flame that would consume these *ladetto* tyrants ?’ ”

“‘Sparks enough, as you call them,’ returned the man; ‘but who is to collect them? There are no chiefs on the island who do not cringe to their masters; ay, and grind us peasants to make up the tax levied upon them. If we murmur, they hunt us from our homes like dogs. If we fly to the mountains, those cursed adventurers drive us out with bloodhounds. Ah,’ continued the peasant, bitterly, ‘when will a Paoli, a Rivalora, and a Sampiero raise again the standard of Liberty. Those were the chiefs that fought and bled for their country, and sold their lands, not to live in luxury on a foreign soil, but to help their people, and save their native land.’

“‘I suppose,’ I replied, taking an interest in the man, ‘we are now on the lands of the Sampiero family, though they have passed, I judge, into other hands.’

“‘Yes, you are now on the property of our young Count, the saints preserve him wherever

he is ! I have never seen him ; for, during the last war, I fought under Rivalora. But the lands are now claimed by his traitorous cousin, the Signor Antonetti, who is employed with that cursed Genoese, Casa Bianca, the commander of Porto Vecchio, hunting the country round for the treasures said to be buried by the Sampieros ; but, by St. Antonio, he is well watched. Old Domenichino is on their track. I am wrong, perhaps, in talking thus even to a countryman ; though I see plainly enough, you are not what you wish to be thought. But I have been hunted twice like a ban-dog. Let them do it again," (he clutched the knife at his girdle), 'and they will find this long enough to reach their black hearts.'

" 'Nay, Nicolo, Nicolo,' exclaimed a young and handsome woman coming from a small chamber adjoining with a fine child in her arms, 'do not be getting into a passion. You

promised me, Caro, for the sake of our dear little one, not to let your temper—'

" 'There, wife, say no more. I am dumb; curse them! You won't deny me that pleasure.'

" 'Perhaps,' said I, 'you could guide us to where old Domenichino is. I am a friend of your chief, and have much to say to his old huntsman and bailiff. I wish also to know what has become of Vanina, the daughter of the Count Cecaldi.'

" 'As to guiding you, Signor,' replied the peasant, changing his tones and manner, 'to where old Domenichino defies his enemies, till I know you and your purpose, you must excuse me. Respecting the Lady Vanina, who was thought to be betrothed to our young chief before the wars, she fell by an unlucky chance into the hands of Casa Bianca, who says he holds her as a hostage in order to keep her numerous vassals, (who broke out several

times into insurrection some months back), in check. She is, I believe, in Castle Ranuncio, which Antonetti and Casa Bianca are fortifying. Indeed, it is said, that Antonetti is to wed the heiress, giving a third of her possessions to this Casa Bianca. Again, they say the Genoese refuses to give him the maiden unless he finds this treasure of our Count's, but the place where it is buried is known only to Domenichino. Accordingly, a large sum is offered for the stout-hearted old huntsman. But he and his grandson defy them. They have already shot four of Bianca's soldiers.'

" 'By St. Antony,' suddenly exclaimed my hitherto silent attendant, 'by St. Antony, Nicolo, you will hardly refuse to tell the son where he may find, and die in defence of, his brave old father.'

" 'Tomaso Domenichino !' joyfully exclaimed the peasant, starting forward to grasp the hand of my follower, who stood up and uncovered

his face. 'How is this? You are,' said he, turning to me, 'our chief! The saints be praised!'

"The poor fellow's joy was, in truth, great; and I had some difficulty in calming his delight.

"'You must not, however, loiter here, my lord,' resumed Nicolo, 'for Antonetti's bailiff comes to this cottage almost every day. In fact, I am only staying here by the desire of Domenichino to watch their doings at La Rocca. So, if you are not too fatigued, we will set out this moment for the hiding-place of the huntsman and his grandson; for he will give you information you little expect.'

"To this, I willingly agreed; for I at once made up my mind to rescue Vanina from the hands of her persecutors. You know that Vanina and I were brought up together; for her father, the Count Cecaldi, was my guardian. I had not seen the maiden for

several years; she was scarcely fourteen then, and a very pretty girl she promised to be.

"We were soon ready to set out, Nicolo having taken from a secret place his bow and a couple of stout hunting spears; for our way lay through a very wild tract of forest land, full of the most savage race of boars in Corsica.

"'Nicolo, Nicolo,' exclaimed his wife, as we were leaving the hut, 'you are going without the *Petra quadrata*.'

'I turned round on hearing those words, and beheld this famous relic of our ancient superstition. No one stirs without this charm in our province.'

"What the deuce is it?" interrogated Paoli, "I never heard of it."

"I dare say not," replied Sampiero; "though I am a native of the province myself, I never, to my knowledge, heard of it, till the unfortunate Berenice, in speaking of the antiquities of

Corsica, mentioned this stone. It is a sort of mineral, found in little square bits, hard like marble, in colour, resembling iron ore, and heavy as lead. How it came to acquire its mystic virtues, I cannot say ; but even Nicolo, a shrewd, clever fellow enough, when I laughingly asked its properties, gravely replied—‘No ill-luck will happen to the wearer, if an honest and true man.’ He added, that it was rare to find ; and many wore false bits. His, he affirmed, was veritable *Petra quadrata*. I made no reply ; but, glad to have in my hand a good tough boar-spear, we set out.

“For three hours, we traversed a wild tract of country, meeting whole herds of our wild and high-spirited horses. We then entered a vast pine wood ; and, in two hours more, just as the moon rose above the snow capped summit of Monte Rotunda, we entered the picturesque valley of the Azinao, into which, from a prodigious height, tumbles the river Azinao, forming a splendid cascade. It took us full

two hours to ascend the hill that rises almost perpendicularly over the torrent.

“ ‘Here we must now pause,’ said our guide.

“And, by the Mass, it was time ; for a more laborious or dangerous journey on foot I never made—I was fairly tired ; as nearly two years had elapsed since I had so exercised myself ; and Nicolo had declared, in setting out, that few, excepting the mountaineers of that wild district, could scale the rocks and hills of the valley of the Azinao.

“ ‘At the other side of this hill, and near the cascade,’ said Nicolo, ‘is encamped the traitor Antonetti and his party ; and not a thousand yards from us, is the hiding-place of old Domenichino. When you are rested, my lord, we will proceed. You will travel the rest of the way by ropes.’

“I looked round me. We were then standing about two hundred feet above the cascade of the Azinao on the brow of a hill covered

with gigantic pines, for which this part of Corsica has been famous ever since the time of the early Romans, who are said to have built so prodigious a ship of the pines of Corsica that she carried fifty sails. The whole side of the hill down which I looked, was covered with the arbutus or strawberry tree. In the clear moonlight the scene was enchanting and sublime; while the roar of the falls came distinctly to the ear. To my right, rose a most singular rock, above a hundred feet high, against whose steep sides and polished surface the moon-beams were glancing.

"After a few minutes' repose, Nicolo gathered together several of the conical pine-seed, and, striking a light, put it to the soft, tinder-like bark of a tree which the peasants use for that purpose. In a minute, a bright blaze shot up into the air, and lasted nearly a quarter of an hour, while I anxiously watched the result, guessing it to be a pre-concerted signal.

“‘Look up to the summit of the rock, my lord,’ said Nicolo. As I did so, I beheld a dark object shew itself over the cliff which I soon perceived to be the head and part of the body of a man, and then another by its side. A low whistle was now heard from above, to which Nicolo replied by another of a peculiar sound ; and, shortly after, I saw a rope-ladder descending the perpendicular side of the rock.’

“‘How, on earth, did old Domenichino get up there ?’ I exclaimed ; ‘for, *per Bacco*, there is not footing for a goat any where.’

“‘Some years ago,’ said Nicolo, ‘the old man was hiding in this part. You must have been a child at that time. It was during one of our unfortunate risings against our oppressors. On the summit of this rock, the huntsman beheld one of those strange animals we call, Muffoli. They resemble a stag ; but have horns like a ram. When holty pursued, these animals will cast themselves from the

top of a precipice, and pitch upon their horns without any hurt. Domenichino, with a bolt from his cross-bow killed the animal, but it remained on the summit, and, finding it impossible to ascend the rock anywhere, he and his comrade cut, with their axes, a young pine from this clump, and, laying it against the side of the rock, succeeded after some difficulty in gaining the summit. On examining the place, Domenichino, at once determined on it as a place of refuge. You will see, on ascending, what a singular place it is.'

"Nicolo ascended first to prepare the old man for my appearance. I then followed, and was welcomed by my faithful old retainer with enthusiasm. He embraced his son with tears in his eyes, for he confessed he never expected to see him again. 'A pretty eagle's nest you have, Domenichino; why half a dozen men might keep this eyrie against fifty.'

"He then led the way into a deep hollow ormed into several spacious caverns in the

sides, in one of which the huntsman and his grandson made their present abode. They had brought various articles into it, making it a tolerably comfortable retreat.

“‘It is a safe nest, my lord,’ said the old man; ‘but a poor place wherein to welcome the owner of the broad lands around us.’

“‘You have suffered much, my good Domenichino; and the pleasure of seeing you here is greater delight to me, than I can express. Your grandson is grown into a fine youth. I wish both you and he had accompanied me to Rome, where I might have settled you happily for the rest of your days.’

“‘What!’ exclaimed the old man, ‘and left the traitor Antonetti to fill his own coffers and those of Casa Bianca with your gold, and the spoils of your house? No, no! I swore to watch and protect it, and I have done so. Crafty as he is,’ chuckled the old huntsman, ‘he may turn up all the land on both sides of the Azinao from Bavello to Dwino, and explore

all the caves beneath the cascade, but not a zechino or a goblet of silver will he find. It's all safe, my lord,' and he rubbed his hands with glee. 'Money, plate, jewels, all safe, and not fifty yards from here, excepting the massive plate; and that lies three fathom deep in its iron chests beneath the waters of the lake of Azinao.'

"I pressed the old man's hand, and inquired how he had contrived to move it from its original place, and whether my treacherous kinsman had obtained any hints as to its whereabouts.

"'He has certainly procured some knowledge as to the vicinity, though not the exact spot,' replied Domenichino; 'for he has never ceased turning up various places near the cascade of the Azinao. The money and small cases, I and my grandson conveyed here in various journeys, and hoisted them up by ropes. Nicolo and his wife's two brothers (better or braver patriots there are none) helped us with the

chests. I contrived, one stormy night, to creep so close to the tent in which Antonetti, and Casa Bianca were sitting drinking, that I overheard a conversation which made my heart beat wildly, and which, my good lord, will transport you with joy. So prepare yourself for a wonderful story. General Paoli is still in existence, and has escaped from the prison in Genoa ! Casa Bianca was also speaking of the rupture between France and Genoa, and the expected withdrawal of the French force from Corsica.'

"But not to weary you," Giacinto, "this intelligence so inspired me that I resolved to raise the standard of revolt the moment the French troops should be withdrawn. 'The first thing to be done,' said I to the huntsman, 'will be to seize upon the persons of Antonetti and Casa Bianca, and carry them with us to the fastness of Monte Bavello. Do you think you could raise some fifty of my retainers for that purpose?' 'Ay, my lord. In twenty -

four hours, I engage to assemble around us two hundred as good and brave fellows as any on the island.'

"To shorten my tale, in three days I mustered nearly two hundred men, poorly armed it is true, but resolute, and willing to die in the cause of their country. We attacked Casa Bianca and his party of treasure-hunters. The commander was a fierce soldier, and fought stoutly; but being surprised, he was slain. Antonetti was secured, and we carried him with us to the hills. In three weeks, the French troops had quitted the island, and before twenty-four hours had elapsed, a hundred signal-fires blazed upon the summits of our hills. The whole of our province now flew to arms; and, at the head of a strong force, I surprised Porto Vecchio, and released my beautiful cousin. Of course, I fell in love with her, though, in sooth, I had little time for wooing. Having placed her in safety in the mansion of a friend, I again retreated to the

hills ; for a powerful body of troops were advancing from Corte against us. But the sparks of freedom were kindled ; and although for nearly a year, we were able to do but little, yet our forces increased each moment all over the island.

“ At length, came news of the defeat of the Genoese fleet off Lorera in Sardinia, and of the tumults in Genoa. Consternation seized upon the Genoese commanders in Corsica. I again became the assailant ; seized several places, and was besieging La Rocca when you astonished us all by your appearance amongst us at Corte, which fell into your hands. Papers were found disclosing the treachery and treason of Antonetti, who had betrayed that city to Campaldino ; and while you were laying siege to Bastia, Gaffieri caused Antonetti to be tried. He was condemned and hung, without pity, from the very ramparts on which the brave Cecaldi and others had perished through his treachery.

“After the landing of your noble father, and when the freedom of our native land was achieved, while you returned to Venice to seek after your betrothed, I took Vanina from her retreat, and placed her under the protection of my aunt, the Countess Rivallora ; and I am happy to say, when we return with your lady-love from this expedition, which I trust we shall, I have Vanina’s promise to unite her destiny to mine.

“So now, Giacinto, I have made my tale as short as possible ; for I see it will soon be time for us to be moving ; and, please the saints, to-morrow will be a busy and a fortunate day with us.”

CHAPTER XV.

ST. JOHN'S DAY.

ST. JOHN'S DAY was ushered in by the inhabitants of the Island of Capraja by the ringing of bells, the decoration of their houses, and various other observances, according to the usages of saint-days in Catholic communities. The principal inhabitants of the island repaired to the house of the ex-podesta, where they were to put on their white mantles, hoods, &c. Padre Bertoldi, the sole priest then on the island, was to head the procession, carrying a silver image of our Saviour, the only relic of value left by the cupidity of the invaders.

During the night, Paoli and his party had safely crossed the island, and were waiting anxiously the arrival of the forty chief inhabitants who were permitted to

visit the chapel in the fortress. The astonishment of the Caprese, when led by the ex-podesta into the long warehouse where stood Paoli, in a suit of chain mail, leaning on a ponderous battle-axe, may easily be imagined. Their joy was almost too boisterous for the place and time. Having moderated their transports at the prospect of so speedy a release from their tyrants, and retaliation for their wrongs and sufferings, the old and venerable priest, blessed the whole party, and their intended expedition.

Paoli instructed them how they were to proceed. The mantles and hoods were transferred to himself and thirty-nine of his men ; the rest were to mingle with the people following the procession ; and the moment Paoli and his party passed the gate, they were to rouse the people, distribute arms, and lead them after Paoli into the fortress. This part of the plan was left under the direction of Luca Manifesto, who carried a stout bow, a weapon in the use

of which, when a youth in the Tyrol, he was celebrated. His skill was wonderful in hitting any object, however small.

Paoli, carried his battle-axe under his mantle; but was forced from his great height to remain without helmet, and to wear a simple hood of chain mail. He much wished Padre Bertoldi to give up heading the procession, fearing that, in the tumult, the old man would be slain. 'I shall die, my son, in a good and holy cause, if it so pleases the Almighty. Let me, therefore, do my duty, in which I have not failed for six-and-twenty years.'

All being in readiness, the procession left the mansion of the Signor Buttaficcio, the priest carrying the silver image. Then came four banners, and after them, the rest with immense wax-tapers in their hands to be lighted in the chapel. In Catholic countries, the mantles and hoods completely envelope the person and face of the wearers, having only

two holes in the front for the eyes, and an aperture to breathe through.

The long, single street which then constituted the town of Capraja, was filled with men, women, and children; the maidens, with garlands in their hands, and the children strewing flowers along the road on which the procession moved.

As they proceeded slowly, our hero cast his glance over the inner and outer harbour, and perceived two fine zebecs, with the Genoese flag hoisted, at anchor in the inner harbour close under the walls of the fortress. The low round tower, within which was the machine for raising the ponderous chain, had a covered way leading to the fortress up an exceedingly perpendicular rock, whereon was reared the outward wall of the ramparts. A glorious sun rode in the heavens; and a fine breeze curled the waters of the outward harbour, on whose bosom rode several vessels at anchor. Before him, rose the pile of building forming

the noble fortress of Capraja; and from the summit of the Keep, in honour of the day, waved the gorgeous banner of the Republic. Beneath it, drooped the once free standard of Capraja.

"By the mass, Giacinto," whispered Sampiero, who walked close beside Paoli, "before another hour is out, I trust to change the position of those two banners. But stoop your head, cousin mine. By St. John, you look two heads higher than any man born on this little island."

"I am sorely cramped as it is, Otho," returned our hero; "and, by my faith, long to stretch myself, and have a mouthful of fresh air. The aperture for my mouth, unfortunately comes across my nose, and I am half blinded to boot. But silence! See, there are a score of armed men drawn up at the entrance of the narrow pass, leading to the draw-bridge of the fortress."

"Yes, *cospetto*! And, at their head, I see

my tall friend, Achilles Furiani," responded Otho.

Both then remained silent, as they were approaching the narrow causeway.

As they came abreast of the twenty comrades of Achilles, the men lowered their long spears and bent their heads to the cross; and when the forty men forming the procession entered the causeway, Achilles made a sign to his comrades, and they immediately formed athwart the rocky pass.

Paoli observed this movement; but it was nothing more than he had expected an experienced commander, like Andrea Campaldino, would order, considering the smallness of the garrison compared with the people still remaining on the island.

The procession, two by two, wound up the steep path, and arrived at the bridge which was down, and the portcullis raised. Paoli could discern files of men-at-arms drawn up in military array, and all in full mail,

having, for a weapon, the short broad sword ready drawn in their hands. Being a wary commander, Campaldino, though without a shade of suspicion, had the whole of his garrison under arms. He himself, in a splendid suit of plate armour, was leaning carelessly on his sword, as he stood near one of the buttresses of the inner court. Four men were placed on each side of the gateway near the ponderous machine used to raise the unwieldy portcullis.

The good priest, Padre Bertoldi, had passed the bridge, when one of the men, bearing the banners, tripped against the iron plates of the drawbridge, and fell at full length. His short sword, carried under his mantle, flew from his hand in the fall, and his iron cuirass rang out clearly and distinctly, as it struck against the rim of the bridge. The warder of the gate saw the sword, and heard the clangour of steel. Springing back towards the gate, he shouted his last cry ; for the words, "Treachery ! Up

bridge !" had scarcely passed his lips, when the axe of Paoli brained him on the spot.

The scene that ensued, was like magic. The words of the ill-starred warder had reached the ears of Campaldino. One moment, he stood astounded. That lost moment was fate ; for though he cried out in a loud voice, "Drop the portcullis !" it was too late. Paoli had torn the mantle from his back ; and, with a bound, reached the spot where the four men, somewhat bewildered by the abruptness of the cry of treachery, and the moment of irresolution that followed, stood with the spokes of the wheel in their hands. Whirling his fatal axe over his head, he swept the space clear of the men, who fled within the gate. Sampiero and the rest of the party, casting aside their mantles, dashed after their chief, making the archway echo again to the shout of "Paoli and liberty !"

At the sound of that name, Campaldino, who was eagerly pressing forward with his men (for, till that moment, he estimated the attempt upon the fortress as a miserable and futile scheme of the islanders themselves), paused and was confounded. His irresolution, however, was only for a moment. With a bitter curse upon his lip, he ordered his chief officer to block the gate ; for they were three times the amount of the enemy ; and, turning away himself, he rushed into the interior of the castle, vowing inwardly that if he sacrificed life, he would have vengeance.

During this brief period, the whole male population of the island, capable of bearing, or using, arms, had become acquainted with the project of taking the fortress. Luca Manifesto supplied most of them with arms ; and the rest, catching up any kind of implement capable of being turned into a weapon of defence, followed Luca ; and, to the utter amazement of Furiani, a host of the natives, shouting wildly

and enthusiastically the name of Paoli, rushed madly upon him and his twenty associates.

“*Corpo di Bacco!* All the devils are let loose on the island. Stand firm, my men. We shall soon drive these madmen into the sea.”

But Achilles had hardly uttered the words, before he found himself standing the whole brunt of the battle. For the twenty adventurers, never famous for fighting against equal numbers, fled up the steep path to the fortress at the sight of nearly two hundred men, brandishing all sorts of weapons as they came bounding along. Furiani bitterly cursed the cowardice of his comrades; and, standing in the middle of the narrow causeway, he courageously determined to fall where he stood.

Gallantly did the Genoese defend the pass; till, overpowered by the pressure of the crowd, he fell; and the Caprese, eager to assist Paoli, trampled over his huge body as it lay

unwounded. Being cased in complete mail, the damage he sustained was trifling ; and not one of the party, stopped to ascertain whether he was dead or alive.

In the mean time, Paoli and Sampiero battled against the entire garrison of the fortress, led on by a brave and skilful officer. The space was confined, till the terrible battle-axe of the Corsican opened the thick ranks of the Genoese ; and, followed by his men, fightingly gallantly, he forced his way into the open space beyond the gates, having first cut and destroyed all the ropes of the draw-bridge, and disabled the wheels of the portcullis. Paoli eagerly sought for Andrea Campaldino. The officer who commanded the garrison, and who wore his visor down, being mistaken for Andrea, our hero, cut his way through the astounded Genoese soldiers, till he reached him. The first blow of his battle axe tore the helmet from the head of the officer, who fell back, stunned and bleeding. Still,

the thick ranks of the men-at-arms blocked up the path to the interior of the fortress, when a loud cheer and his own name, echoed from wall and bastion, proclaimed the arrival of Luca Manifesto and the islanders, driving before them the comrades of Achilles.

Burning with anxiety to terminate the contest, knowing how deep was Campaldino's desire of vengeance, and fearing he knew not what for his betrothed, Paoli cheered on his men, and whirling his axe over his head, every blow brought down a victim. Thus, he cut his way through the men-at-arms, who, terrified by his fearful strength and resistless strokes, and seeing their officers sorely wounded, and deserted by their commander, threw down their arms and surrendered.

As Paoli made his way through the men-at-arms, he beheld, crossing the court before the inner gate of the building, a man in a rich suit of armour, bearing a female in his arms,

apparently insensible. He was making rapid way towards a low gateway in the ramparts, which led to the tower on the water's edge, from which there was a secret passage. Campaldino, for he it was, bearing the fainting Agnes in his arms, intended to escape through that outlet; for, anchored close to the tower, were the two Genoese zebecs. But Paoli, who had recognised Andrea, sprang, with a shout of triumph, between him and the path to the gate. With a withering curse, Campaldino turned aside; and, active and determined, gained the rampart wall. Below him, within four feet, was a perpendicular descent of nearly a hundred feet, terminating in a range of broken rock. In a loud and clear voice, he shouted to Paoli, who was rushing forward—

“I triumph, rebel, even in defeat! I perish; but, with me dies thy betrothed! Vengeance is still mine!”

As he spoke, he raised the maiden in his

arms ; but, as he did so, the twang of a bow was heard close beside the horror-stricken Paoli. The same instant, an arrow, driven with unerring aim, and deadly force, entered the brain of Campaldino. With a frantic and desperate energy, Paoli sprang upon the rampart ; and, even before the lifeless body of the Genoese, lay stretched upon the wall, he caught the senseless form of Agnes, unhurt, in his arms ; while Luca Manifesto, with a smile, turning to Sampiero, who had arrived in time to witness his hazardous and marvellous skill with the bow, said, “ You see my lord, presentiment and an internal prompting are not always to be despised. I could not say why I felt the strange hankering to hold again my favorite weapon. When leaving home, I selected this good bow. I tried several shots and I found that the skill which once gave me a proud name in my native hills had not deserted me. The night before we sailed from Ficaoli, I dreamed I

stood upon the summit of the Broehden, and, below me, I beheld the Signor Paoli. His hands were bound ; and, coming towards him, was a monstrous bear, howling fearfully. I put an arrow in my bow, and though the distance in my dream was beyond all the power of a bow, I shot, and the arrow stood quivering in the brain—not of a bear—but of a knight in full mail. With this, I awoke. I carried my bow with me ; and, thank God, this day it has repaid in part the noble generosity of my lord.”

“And now,” said Sampiero, looking up, with a satisfied smile, at the tall standard on the Keep, “the free banner of Capraja waves over the flag of the proud republic. May it never wave over a race of freemen again !”

As the Count ceased speaking, and followed Paoli into the interior of the fortress, one long, wild and enthusiastic shout rent the air.

"Paoli, and the islands, for ever!" Such was the cry; and, before it died away, the two armed zebecs cut their cables, and, hoisting every sail to the breeze, rapidly receded from the rocky shores of Capraja.

CONCLUSION.

SEVENTEEN years, since the events recorded in the foregoing chapter, had passed away; many a St. John's day had been celebrated in the little island of Capraja; and many of the inhabitants, who had then flourished in it, had quitted the scene, when, towards the close of a very stormy day at the latter end of September, there stood, leaning over the rampart wall of the fortress, three individuals; one, an old and extremely venerable-looking Signor;

the other two, a fine and handsome woman, still in her prime, and a tall and graceful boy.

"Come here, Paulo," said the old Signor, to the boy; "your eyes are younger and better than mine; though, the Madonna be praised, I have much to be thankful for, and my sight is not yet absolutely bad. Look, and tell me if that is not a dismayed carrick away to the westward. There seems to me to be a thick haze over the craft, and creeping up towards us."

"You are right, grand uncle," said the boy after a moment's hesitation. "I can now make her out quite plain. She is a galley without masts; and I do not see that they are using their oars. She is rolling heavily in the swell, after last night's gale."

"She has suffered, no doubt," said the old Signor, "from the hurricane of last night; and probably may not be able to use her sweeps. Our pilots are grown lazy of late.

‘Hoist the signal, Paulo, and make it known that a vessel is in distress in the offing.’

“I’ll do it in a moment, grand uncle,” replied the boy; “and afterwards I will run down to the quay, and go out in the boat to her with old Filippo.”

“Nay, Paulo, you had better not,” rejoined his mother, who was no other than Annette, the pretty niece of the re-instated podesta of Capraja, who, after the storming of the fortress, had—start nor gentle reader if you are of the softer sex—actually married the huge Achilles Furiani. The why, and the how, we will explain before the end of the chapter. “It is getting late; the sea is still heaving,” continued the mother, “and may rise as suddenly as it abated.”

“Nay, mother, you need not fear. An hour will take us to the galley and back;” and, without stopping, the boy hoisted the signal and then made away to the quay.

In less than half-an-hour three well-manned

boats pulled from the harbour ; and, before the sun had set, the dismasted and leaky galley was safely moored in the inner harbour of Capraja.

From the galley's side, a noble looking and richly-attired Signor, about forty-three years old, descended into a barge sent by the governor who was our old acquaintance, the Signor Buttaficcio. The stranger then handed down the side a lady, closely wrapped in mantles, with a hood over her head and face. She appeared to be suffering either from ill-health, or the effects of a long and stormy voyage. A remarkably handsome and spirited-looking youth, followed with a lovely girl into the boat, which then pulled for the shore ; and, shortly after, the strangers and their attendants, were lodged, by orders of the podesta, in the best apartments of the fortress.

It was not till the following day that the storm-tossed voyagers were able to accept of the hospitable attentions of the podesta, and

then only the Signor and his son met at the table of their venerable host and his niece, whose husband was absent in Pisa, whither he had taken his daughter and eldest son to spend a week or so.

The lady and her daughter were yet weak from the effects of the voyage.

"We are vastly indebted to you, Signor Podesta, and to your very obliging people," said the noble stranger, as he warmly returned the kind greetings of the old podesta. "Had not your boats reached us, we should scarcely have outlived the night. We could only keep the leaks down by all hands bailing. If we ceased a moment to row, we ran the danger of sinking. During the whole voyage from Marseilles (and we have been thirteen days at sea), we experienced tremendous gales from the land. Last night we lost our remaining mast and four of our unfortunate crew. My wife and daughter suffered greatly."

"It was, in truth, a fearful night, Signor,"

returned the podesta. "The gale howled so awfully over the ramparts, and through the chambers of this fortress, that I could not rest. I am happy, Signor, to have been able to render you some assistance; and I can also furnish you with everthing necessary for the repairs of your galley."

"If I mistake not, Signor Governor," remarked the stranger, after returning thanks, "this romantic island belonged, or, perhaps, still belongs, to an ancient Corsican family, the Damaris. Pray is the Marchese Bartolomeo Damari still living?"

"Three days ago, Signor, thanks to a merciful Providence, he was alive, and, for his years, well."

"I rejoice in my heart to hear such is the case, Signor," returned the stranger, with a pleased smile. "I have not heard any intelligence of him, or those dear to him, for the last fourteen years. All that bear the name of

Damari and P.oli are dear to the memory of my consort and myself."

At that moment the door of the saloon opened, and the young daughter of the princely-looking stranger entered, and kissed her father, who looked fondly and proudly upon the fair and graceful girl, to whose cheeks the roses were fast returning?

"Well, love," said he, "how fares your mother?"

"So very much better does she feel, dear father, that she bids me say she will shortly follow me, so anxious is she to converse with our kind host concerning those she has so often regretted and so fondly loved."

The old Governor looked bewildered upon the fair speaker. Years past seemed to come before the mind's eye, at once vivid and indistinct. In the fine features of the stranger's child, he fancied the daughter of the Damaris stood before him, as she did years ago. Who

was this princely stranger whose child conjured up such distant remembrances? The Governor passed his hands over his eyes, and muttered something to himself. Then he thought a strange smile sat upon the stranger's features; but the next moment the consort of the latter entered.

"Signor Buttaficcio," said the lady, advancing to prevent the old Governor from rising, and extending her hand, which the worthy podesta received with profound respect, and looked into her features with a start of astonishment. The lady smiled, and continued—"We are old friends, though we have not met before. I see you look upon me with bewildered surprise; for, no doubt, you perceive the strong likeness that has always existed between me and Agnes Damari, or, rather, the Countess Paoli. We can have no reserve with you, the dear friend of my beloved Agnes's father." The lady looked at her husband, and continued

—"My husband is Ugolino Carrara, and I was once Paulina Tiepolo."

"*Santa Madonna!*" exclaimed the podesta; "Can this be the case? Ugolino Carrara was driven, as I have heard, from his principality by the tyranny and treachery of Venice."

"Even so, Signor Governor," returned the Carrara, somewhat bitterly. "But they have not been able to take from me these treasures," and his arm enfolded the still beautiful Paulina—"so I forgive them."

"And now, dear Signor Buttaficcio," said the Princess, "tell me all about my beloved Agnes and her noble husband. The last we heard of them was from a Corsican Signor whom we met at Milan. But he could only speak of the past. I wish, however, to hear of the events that followed Paoli's return to Corsica, and of the occurrences that took place on the restoration of the Marchese Damari to Capraja."

"Willingly, dear lady," returned the Governor, "will I inform you of all that happened to those you love so well, and who also dearly remember you and yours. Before I begin, may I ask, does your ladyship's noble father still live?"

"Alas, no!" replied the Princess Carrara, with a sigh. "My beloved father has been dead three years; but he reached a fair term of life, and his latter days were most happy. Perhaps it was as well he lived not to see his child, and her husband, and all his race, doomed by the tyrants of Venice to become wanderers from their homes."

The Signor Buttaficcio then gave the princess a full account of all the trials undergone by Agnes subsequently to her return to Capraja.

"After the taking of the fortress," continued the old podesta, "Paoli departed with his betrothed and her father for Corsica, where, very

shortly after, they were married. Luca Manifesto, whose daring nerve and skill had saved the Lady Agnes at a moment of terrible peril, was presented by the generous Paoli—as a gift to him and his heirs, for ever—with the small, but rich fief of Ficaoli. His son, who grew into a fine youth, is now in Rome for education, with the eldest son of Paoli. General Paoli still lives, and busies himself with the welfare of his beloved country. He has concluded a treaty with France, and permitted a French settlement on the island, so that Genoa, even if she attempts to recover the island, will no longer have the powerful assistance of France. Count Otho Sampiero married Vanina Cecaldi, and devotes his time and great wealth in building and strengthening the harbours and towns on the coast. Julianio Verbano, your *ci-devant* gondolier, married the daughter of Luca Manifesto, and is steward over the Paoli property of Mariana. Pulini, our patron's

faithful squire, is still about the person of his chief; but treated more as the friend than the dependant."

"And that fair dame we saw yester-eve, when we came here, and that fine boy, who are they, Signor Buttaficcio?" demanded the Princess Carrara.

"My niece, your ladyship, and her son. Singular enough, one of the officers, named Achilles Furiani, who came here in the company of the Genoese Governor, Campaldino, insisted, during the time the Genoese held this island, on offering himself as a suitor to one of my nieces, for I have two, your ladyship; but Annette, who was then a lively and somewhat giddy girl, at times laughed at and tormented her huge lover, who is a man of very lofty stature, and in truth of a goodly presence, though, at that time, somewhat given to wine. But, Santa Madonna, he is so changed now that no one would imagine he was the

same individual. Excuse an old man's garrulity.

"At the storming of the fortress, Achilles was deserted by his men; he fought bravely, but was overthrown by the crowd of enraged natives, and trampled under foot as they rushed up the steep path to the Castle. He was, however, only bruised; but, as he rose to make his way back into the fortress, he was again assailed by those left behind, and finally wounded on the head by a heavy crow-bar. The furious people were going to carry him, armour and all, and threw him into the port, when my niece stopped the crowd, and insisted on their leaving the wounded man under our roof. I came up at the time, and forbade their committing so cruel and unnecessary an act. Accordingly, Furiani was carried into the house; and, to shorten my story, during eight or nine weeks, Annette was his nurse; for, somehow or other, the girl did not dislike this

strange man. When he got well, he refused to quit the island, for all his countrymen were exchanged, though, by-the-bye, he swears he is not a Genoese, but a native of Milan. However, here he staid, became an altered man, left off all his old habits, and, after a year's trial, Annette married him. General Paoli and his son, two years subsequently, visited our island: the younger Paoli knew something of Achilles Furiani before. It appears he had acted humanely towards the Signor when taken prisoner and wounded at Pera; and hearing how well Achilles has conducted himself since his marriage, and knowing him to be a brave and also a skilful soldier, he gave him the command of the garrison of this fortress, and a good salary out of the tolls collected from the shipping. Achilles leads a very happy life, is devoted to his wife and family, and keeps his fortress and garrison in great order. He is now absent in Pisa; but we expect him

shortly. Once every year, our young chief and his beloved consort visit this little island, which he inherits in right of his wife.

“And now, dear lady, I have told my tale, and I trust have not fatigued you with my prolix narrative.”

“Far from it; in truth, my dear sir, I have not lost one word; for every trifle relating to those dear relatives and friends is gratifying to my heart. Were we not now, for political reasons, anxiously desirous to reach Naples, what joy it would give us to spend a few days with your chief and his family; but we have already lost precious time, and much of our future fate depends on this voyage.”

Three days after this, the galley of Carrara was sufficiently repaired to put to sea. After many kind remembrances, and a packet of letters for the Countess Paoli, written during their stay, the noble, but persecuted, Carrara and his beloved consort, who clung to him de-

votedly through the whole of his singular and romantic fortunes, left the shores of Capraja to embark again on the stormy path that was destined to be his from the cradle to the grave.

THE END.

Table 1. Mean (SD) age, height, weight, and body mass index (BMI) of the participants in each group.

Group	Age (years)	Height (cm)	Weight (kg)	BMI (kg m ⁻²)
Control	12.1 (0.4)	150.5 (6.1)	40.5 (10.2)	18.2 (2.8)
Low	12.1 (0.4)	150.5 (6.1)	38.5 (9.8)	17.2 (2.7)
High	12.1 (0.4)	150.5 (6.1)	42.5 (10.5)	19.2 (2.9)

Control = no treatment; Low = low-dose treatment; High = high-dose treatment.

the control group. The mean (SD) age, height, weight, and BMI of the participants in each group are shown in Table 1.

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